Sarup Book

RE-UNDERSTANDING SHORT STORIES

N. SHANTHA NAIK

Re-understanding of short stories is a collection of twelve different Articles. Many short story writers in Indian English in Peninsula and Europe and their country short stories in General. India is land where all aged people use to tell number of stories to their grand children. We all have a memory of the past which is enriched with stories told by our grandparents. Many children might have thought that their grandparents might be the granaries of stories, short story as a genre in literature attracted may readers. Indeed it is in the blood of human being to narrate a story. Indeed narrating story is in the bold of human being. So, cultivated story telling since ages. Many stories are told and retold from generation to generation. In this connection we suddenly remember folklores of the world. Short story a genre of literature's are shadow with modern technological invention. In this collection many writers have been discussed on and opened platform to the discussion. Many ignored and forgotten story writers are brushed up to sparkle in the gallery of the literature.

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and warm blessings

Luke

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Re-Understanding Short Stories

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Edited by:

Dr. N. Shantha Naik

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Preface

Re-understanding of short stories is a collection of sixteen different Articles. The articles are analytical on many short story writers of world in general and short stories writer in Indian English in prticular. Many short story writers in Indian. India is land where aged people use to tell number of stories to their grand children. We all have a memory of the past which is enriched with stories told by our grandparents. Many children might have thought that their grandparents might be the granaries of stories. Short story as a genre in literature attracted many readers. Indeed it is in the blood of human being to narrate a story. Narrating story is in the bold of human being, so, cultivated story telling since ages. Many stories are told and retold from generation to generation. In this connection we suddenly remember folklores of the world. Short story a genre of literature's are shadow with modern technological invention. In this collection many writers have been discussed on and opened platform to the discussion. Many ignored and forgotten story writers are brushed up to sparkle in the galaxy of the literature.

I am thank full to all contributors for their immediate response and timely sending their research oriented articles. For, re-understanding short stories. Without their contribution this book could not be possible. My sincere thanks, to my children Aniketan. S. Naik. and Akampan. S. Naik for helping me to edit this work. I must thanks my wife

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1

Re-Understanding Saadat Hasan Manto

—Dr. N. Shanth Naik

Saadat Hasan Manto, was born at Samrala, twenty-two kilometer away from Ludhiana, on 11 May 1914. After Manto's birth his father transfered to Amritsar and got retired as sub-judge. Manto's father and Manto had a feeling of pride that they are Kashmiries.

After listening Manto by a Friend at Delhi I was eager to read him. I do not know whether his short stories have been translated into English or not. But I found a Kannada book on Saadat Hasan Manto. Dr. Suraj Prakash Badtya, Prof. Vimal Throat and many others referred his name in one of my visit to Delhi. Manto's 'Cold Flesh' is a story reveals the havoc and terror of the partition. Ishar Sing who was carrying a young girl on his shoulders to protect her in safety place was died of fears. Ishar Sing is so inhuman that he intercourse with the dead body of the girl. This heinous crime of a man is a stain on human civilization. A criminal or rapist basically is a human being, though he was satisfied at that moment he cannot escape from the memory. The destructive impact has to be faced, lshar Sing who become an impotant later. Kulwant Kaur enraged on him thinking that he had an affair with some other woman stabs him and killed. Ishar Sing, who

was killed many lives in partition riot. This realism made Manto to go to court. Manto is such a realist short story writer that he openly admitted that he studied the life. We can trace, heart beats and Jew Lanes, Buffalo herds, dark dungeon hut of horse carriage drivers. Irani and Islamic hotels. Chinese dentists, Parsi doctors, dispensaries of Hakim. The only big red light area at district Pharas road, Tamtams, malish and polish, malpani, Juggar, Guttala, and many other Persian words he used in his short stories.

Some of the names he used in short stories are Mister D'costa, Mr. Disilva, Kishorlal Khari, Mungphali Walla Sougandhi, Muzel Mamad Bai, Newspaper vendors, beetle leave vendors,Taxi Wallas, hotel servants, and many other characters take a real life in his short stories. The mindless clashes left deep impression on his heart. He asked *lauds* blood flowing with the mindless practices. He symbolizes Religion to eagle hawk. His 'New Law' for 'The Freedom' and other stories are matured. But they did not identified by the readers. His 'New Law' is a story discussed much in the intellectuals group. Independence has come to India. New constitution was announced, it was renaissance to Indians, people left that they were all removed Shackles. Mango a horse carriage rider feels that everything is changed. As, the children felicitate the festival with new cloth, sweets and other things Mungoo also celebrating the Independence. In April first woke up in gentle mood. But he feels that whole world remained same, the enthusiasm, eagerness he did not find anywhere. New constitution was declared but there is good governance is not found. Manto as a shrewd technician expressed his art of weaving in this story.

For the freedom: reveals processions, public meetings, stickers, sweet disturbances. He wrote about non-cooperative movement in Amritsar. He created situation that, the reader will feel they are the participants of the movement regretting issue till Indian get its Independence.

He depicted Enthusiastic, very active and strong minded rather than useless fellows.

He has written some of the stories on true love, teenage. Depicting them he will be the naturalist. Stories like *True Lover*, *Two Religious*, *Go Haniff Go*, Promise Seller and Peshawar to Lahore and other stories explore different emotions and feelings in them. True Lover unveils the fact. What is true love is; In their first meeting in cinema hall teenagers exchange the glance. Boy follows the girl she open window of her house again a glance leads them to meet secretly. Girl expose with the boy, they goes to a town, hire a rented room, boy unveils her pardha. He attracted with her beauty and bend forward to kiss her lower lip where a mole is seen. She escapes and open her mouth to say no. Her mouth is stinking unhealthy teeth gums. Boy bewildered tells her that he will be back with in no time goes out and never return back. What is important here is Manto's selection of theme and subject. He selected subject which is true to the life. In his Ugly is triangle story of Hamida, Sajida and Hameed. Ugly Hameeda was rejected by many bridegrooms one morning she appears in first of her brother-in-law Hameeda's room instated of Sajeeda. Next morning he divorce Sajeeda and marry Hameeda. Manto, did not hesitate to chore a theme of religion in his writing. Mukthar and Sharada crossed all their boundaries. Emotionally they are husband and wife, except marriage. When Sharada ask a question, how we marry? Mukthar, replies with a smile that, what is the problem? You convert yourself to Islam. How can it possible me to become a Hindu you call Hindu a religion, where Islam is a good religion. Go away; our Hindu religion is worst where as you are a good Muslim. She criticizes, Mukthar embrace Kuran and goes away. Even in "*Go Hanif Go*" also has the same sequence, here the issue is different. Religion is not the issue, social prejudices and practices. Blackslwar, Ten rupees, Janki, Phuba Bai, Sharada, Suraj, Hundred Candle voltage Bulb

and many other stories reveal this social evil. He tried to find woman's face in a prostitute and mother's face in a woman. He tried to explore the inner microscopic feelings of prostitutes. A woman who forced to choose prostitution never lose her womanhood along with human values and religion womanhood in her soul remain alive. Manto's writing is so sharp and blunt that many issues are absorbed in it. Passion of country, riots, evacuated caravans, evacuated people's camp dilemmas, rajakas sexual stories and similar kind of stories he has written. This survey proves that Saadat Hasan is one of the best short story writers in India in particular and world in general. All the secrets and techniques of writing short stories were safely stored in his art. We cannot find repetition in his writings. All his stories are created impact, which are flowing in creative impulse. Individual should have same sight to read Manto. All stories have inner sight which required innovative ideas most of us realize about Manto sharpness in analysis which reflect in his writing. His subjectivity and realism proved many blind beliefs and evidence less opinion are false. After reading Manto; we would able to know our rights. Instead of pungent writer, scholarly writer, a finest sensed artist, his imagination might became wild and would have burnt papers on which he has written his short stories. He was a cultured creator and great artist. That's why even dry leave of the branches when they pass through his imagination get life. Saadat Hasan Manto, a mad lover of writing created history in Indian literature of pre-independence era. After partition he went Pakistan, again he back to Mumbai tried his luck in film industry, worked in AIR, worked as editor and many other odd jobs. But he left a wonderful world behind him which has to explored and keep alive for the generations.

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2

The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth: A Critique of Eco-criticism

—Dr. N.H. Kallur

The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth is one of the famous stories by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, a wellknown Malayalam short story writer and novelist. His stories have been translated into English and various Indian languages. He was the Honorary Fellow of the Sahitya Akademi in 1970. He was the recipient of the Central Sahitya Akademi Award. This story is translated into English by Vanajam Ravindran. The story depicts the narrator's sympathetic treatment of birds and animals, unkind acts of modern man and kind acts of indigenous people towards birds and animals. The present paper tries to examine *The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth* from an Eco-criticism perspective and explore how the man's attitude to Nature has changed from reverence to destruction. It also deconstructs the notion that the theory of 'Ecocriticism' has originated in the West.

A Brief History of Eco-criticism

The word 'Eco-criticism' first appeared in William Rueckert's essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment*

in Eco-criticism in 1978. However it remained inactive in critical vocabulary until 1989. In the Western Literature Association meeting Cheryll Glofelty suggested for the use the term 'Eco-criticism'. Glen Love (Professor of English at the University of Oregon) seconded it. Since that meeting in 1989 the usage of the term has bloomed. In 1992 the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was established. In 1993 another association the Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE) was established. It is said to be officially heralded in 1996 by the publication of two seminal works: *The Eco-criticism Reader*, edited by Gloyfelty and Harold Fromm and *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. At present eco-criticism is in full swing and is a readily accepted theory worldwide. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward natural relationships and views the individual as a member of ecosystem.

Major Concerns of Eco-criticism

Today the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analyzed and emphasized in all the departments of knowledge. The literary critics try to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualized by writers in their works. In this context two terms have become very important today ecology and eco-criticism. Ecology is defined as the way in which plants, animals, and people are related to each other and their environment. In this relationship they are so much interdependent on each other that any disturbance in one disturbs the other. Eco-criticism is said to be the study of the relationship between literature and environment. Despite the broad scope of enquiry, the significant stand of ecological criticism is that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. As a theoretical discourse it negotiates between the human and non-human. Its practitioners explore human attitudes

toward the environment as expressed in nature writing. Eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary criticism. Eco-critics and theorists are concerned with whether the nature is being represented or whether the physical setting has a role in the plot or whether the values expressed are consistent with the ecological wisdom or whether in addition to race, class, gender and other issues, 'place' has become a new critical category and in what ways and to what effect the environment crisis is seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture. Eco-criticism has come to mean not only the application of ecology and ecological principles to study of literature, but also the theoretical approach to the interrelational web of natural, cultural, and supernatural phenomena.

Most ecological works share the concerns that the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support system and a desire to contribute to environmental restoration. If we disturb Nature, Nature disturbs us.

There are a few literary works in the history of Indian English literature which can be read through the lens of eco-criticism. It is true that a serious concern with ecology seems to be lacking in the earlier works, yet nature has been used as an important backdrop against which the story develops. Literature being well known for reflecting the contemporary issues, today ecology is one of the most discussed issues. The *Rightful Inheritors of the Earth* is one of the stories which not only throws light on the ecological issues but also critiques it.

Plot of the Story and a Critique of the Theory of Eco-criticism

The narrator of the story is the owner of a two acre land with coconut palms and an old house. Life runs smoothly for many years without any disturbance. Once a variety of birds and beautiful butterflies arrive and perch on the

boughs of trees and plants in that tiny land. Crows and hawks have also arrived there and ready to swoop on the chicks. Foxes and mangooses have followed them and are waiting to pounce on the hens. Squirrels and crows are feasting on the ripened jackfruits. Birds and bats are eating up all the guavas, sapotas and graft mangoes. Then a cobra has also arrived there. The arrival of these birds and animals is viewed differently. Here is the critique of attitude of man towards nature. The author juxtaposes two characters the narrator and his wife representing different views. The narrator welcomes the arrival of birds and animals and has sympathetic concern for them. On the other hand his wife has opposite view. The chirping of the birds and fluttering of butterflies has made the narrator delighted. The narrator is so sympathetic he remarks that when every bit of land is purchased by man where these birds and animals have to go. He further remarks "God almighty who holds the universe together without a single prop, has created a variety of things for His creatures–fruit, edible roots, grass, grain, flowers, water, air, warmth and light". He wonders why men don't think that birds, beasts and insects too are entitled to the produce the earth. He regrets that rats and other animals are being killed while experimenting and testing newly discovered medicines. The narrator hopes the need of discovering a scientific method and a novel idea that would make possible for us to live without killing any creatures. These feelings of the narrator exemplify his concern for birds and animals and his desire for harmonious existence of animals and human beings.

On the other hand the narrator's wife is very much worried about the loss of nine hundred coconuts every month. She is enraged and considers them as interlopers and plans to get rid of them. She thinks that the birds, insects and animals that have taken shelter in their land are causing the loss. Therefore, in spite of the

opposition from her husband she decides to get rid of them by poisoning. She brings the poison, mixes it with bananas, rice, tapioca, and keeps all over the place and beneath the coconut palms as well. Consequently in four days, five hens, twelve squirrels, two hundred rats and a cat disappeared behind the curtains of time forever. The worrying and surprising factor is that even after that also coconuts continue to fall. This irrational and unkind act of the narrator's wife suggests that due to ignorance several helpless, innocent birds and animals are victimized. After some days the coconut-palm climbers are consulted to know the cause for continued fall of coconuts. They opined, "The owls are the culprits. They peck at the tender coconuts". It is an old saying and myth they have heard from their fathers. In fact the owls are not vegetarian creatures. After a couple of months, the real culprits are discovered--the bats. "After dusk, huge bats come in swarms and cling to the tender coconuts. They gnaw into the tender flesh and have their fill of coconut water. After eating the kernels, they fly away, gratified..."

Knowing the cause for the loss of coconuts the narrator's wife decides to put an end to them by shooting with a gun. She pleads her husband to join her in her venture. But he squarely rejects her request and says, "I shall not be a party to that. The gun is a symbol of cruelty. It is the child of sin. Man should never have invented it". But she has decided to kill them, so she asks her cousin to help in her endeavor. As he readily consents to that she buys an advanced and expensive gun. In order to root out the cause for the problem the narrator's wife and her cousin go to an islet nearby. There near by an old temple thousands of bats are hanging on a couple of banyan trees. But the narrator's wife and her cousin have to return empty handed, shamefaced, terrified, and narrowly escaping from the death. Because when the narrator's wife and her cousin have gone there, in a split of second about hundred people

armed with lethal weapons surround them and threaten to kill them if they shoot at the bats. Because they believe that "bats are the souls of their ancestors".

This episode signifies that the narrator's wife and her cousin stand for modern people who use all the modern things like poison and gun to kill birds and animals. They are unkind to birds and animals and their attitude towards them is destructive. The inhabitants of the islet are indigenous people who are kind to birds and animals. Their attitude towards them is reverential one. They live in harmony with the nature. This episode also illustrates how our concern for Nature has changed from reverence to destruction.

The history of Eco-criticism discussed above shows that like other critical theories, this theory has also been borrowed from the West. The theory may be the West coined recent one and might have been borrowed from the West, but the ideology it implies is not new to India. Thus, through this story the writer deconstructs the origin and recentality of the theory of Eco-criticism in a postcolonial fashion. The episode suggests that reverential attitude and concern for nature and its creatures is present in Indian culture since time immemorial. In the conclusion part the narrator opines that let coconuts be destroyed, that does not matter, let us be satisfied with what we get after they have taken their share. They certainly have the right to the produces of this earth. Because they are part of Almighty's creation. Through this he pleads for the harmonious living with the Nature

Conclusion

The Rightful Inheritors of the Earth is one of the famous stories of contemporary relevance. It depicts the kind treatment of birds and animals by the narrator, unkind treatment of them by his wife and her cousin, and the death of several birds and animals due to ignorance and

lack of right knowledge. In the context of Global Warming, depletion of ground water level, extinction of several birds and animal species, herbal plants and trees, relentless unearthing of minerals and careless use of natural resources, the message of the story that if we disturb Nature, Nature disturbs us is very relevant. That is why we have to be merciful to birds and animals, be satisfied with what we get after birds and animals, the rightful inheritors of the earth, have taken their share and live in harmony with Nature. Besides this the story deconstructs the origin and recentality of the concept of Eco-criticism in a postcolonial fashion.

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3

The Social Realism in Munshi Premchand's the Short Stories

—Dr. Ashok Hulibandi

Premchand is an Indian writer; he is famous for his modern Hindustani literature. He is one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent and is regarded as one of the foremost Hindustani writers of the early twentieth century. He began writing under the pen name "Nawab Rai", but subsequently switched to "Premchand". He is a novelist, dramatist and short story writer. He is an author of a dozen novels, around 250 short stories, and several essays. He is considered the first Hindi author, whose writings are prominently featured of the social realism. His short stories portray a rationalistic outlook, which views religious values as something that allows the powerful hypocrites to exploit the week. He used literate for the purpose of arousing public awareness about national and social issues and often wrote a related to corruption, childhood, prostitution, feudal system, caste system, colonialism and the India's freedom movement.

This article focuses on the Realism in Premchand's the select short stories. One of the important short story is 'Thakur's Well". In the story Premchand depicts the social exploitation of untouchables. Indian society is the caste based, the Brahman is top, Kshatriya is stand in the

second place, Vyasa is stands in the third place and Shudra is the bottom of the society. Three classes always enjoy the position and privileges; that class are economically, socially, religiously and educationally top position.

Untouchables are only suffering classes in India. The food, water, air, and shelter are basic need to human being. In this story Jokhu is an untouchable and a poor fellow, he is suffering from ill. He does not have a proper food and water. He was a thirsty, he took a one *lota* of the water to drink, he lifted the *lota* to his mouth but "the water smelled foul", and he cannot drink. He asked his daughter Gangi "What kind of water is this"? It stinks so much I can't drink it! My throat's burning and you give me water's turned bad!" Gangi is his daughter she filled the water jug every evening but the well was a long way off and was hard for her to make several trips. She lifted the lota the water had bad smelled, she thought that surely some animal must have fallen into the well and died. But she cannot bring alternative water to her father.

Indian society is caste based society, no one will allow her to bring the water from well. The Thakur's well or Shop keeper's well and the privilege class Brahman's well were prohibited her to fetch the water from their well. But Jokhu is dying from a thirsty. Jokhu called his daughter Gangi and said "I am so thirsty I can't stand it. Bring me the water, I will hold my nose and drink a little". Gangi did not give smelled foul the water to Jokhu because if he drinks foul water his sickness would get worse and she does not know that by boiling water is safe. Gangi rejects to serve the water she said that she will go and get some water from the well. It is great surprise to Jokhu questioned himself that who will allow her to fetch the water? When will she brings the water? But Gangi has decided to bring good water but Jokhu did not believe in it.

Premchand depicts the reality of Indian society; it has been caste based. He described the nature of Thakur's

caste. How Thakurs are so cruel? Jokhu knows the nature of Thakur when his daughter Gangi says that she will fetch the water from Thakur's well, he said "you'll come back with your arms and legs broken, that's all. You would better just sit down and keep quiet". Premchand depicts the nature of each caste in Indian society. The privilege class people are always cruel, commercial and cursed. Jokhu said to Gangi, "The Brahman will give a curse, the Thakur will beat you with a stick and that money lending shopkeeper takes five for everyone he gives." It is harsh reality of the Indian society; these people will never let you draw after from their wells. Gangi without responding a word and denying, she moves to fetch the water.

That day was very dark, by nine at night the dead tired hands past asleep. She reached the Thakur's property to fetch the water from his well. A small oil lamp was lit up the well, she sat hidden the wall and began to wait for the right movement, she hided like a thief. The whole village people use to drink the water except unlucky people like Gangi. It was very close to everyone but untouchable could not touch the well. An innocent girl thinks that "why was so low and those others so high! Because they were a thread around their necks? There was not one of them in the village who was not rotten. They stole, they cheated, they lied in court". She afraid of those people, if anybody saw her, they will kill her, so she hided in the dark shadows of a tree, she saw two women had fetched the water and left. She came out from the shadow of the tree and drew close to the well platform. Thakur had shut his door and gone inside to the courtyard to sleep. Gangi gets a relief, she looped the rope around the bucket, finally she prays to the God and mustered her courage and caste the bucked into the well, and slowly it sank in the water. She yanked it back up with all her might to the rim of the well, she has not stray armed athlete could have dragged it up move swiftly. She had just stopped to catch it and

set it on the wall but Thakur suddenly open the door the rope escaped from her hand the bucket fell into the water. Thakur yelling "who's there' who's there?" came towards the well but Gangi jumped from the platform and ran away as fast as she could. She reached home but Jokhu was drinking filthy stinking water.

Premchand's short story "The Story of two Bullocks", is a fine short story. He depicts human cruel nature, innocence of bullocks and their good nature. The donkey is considered the wised of all animals and when we want to call someone a complete idiot we call him as ass. It is hard to say whether the donkey is really stupid or whether he has earned this sobriquet because of his straight forward nature and matchless forbearance. It is a story of two Bullocks, they shared their feelings and they rebelled against an injustice. He also said the modern society's nature, "The fact is that straight forwardness is not suitable to this World" (Premchand 215). Premchand ironically speaks about Americans, Americans vices on African is that "It is said that they lower the standards of life. If they too learn to take an eye for an eye, they will perhaps begin to be called civilized" (Premchand 216). Some animals are honest; Bullocks also show their displeasure in several other ways.

Jhuri Kachhi has two bullocks, namely Hira (Diamond) and Moti (Pearl), were of a very good breed, beautiful, muscular and hard working. They had lived together for a long time and became like brothers. They would sit facing each other or side by side and exchange their thoughts in a silent language. Premchand had point out their love, "they expressed their love by licking and smelling one another and sometimes they would lock horns not in conflict, but in play just as close friends wrestle with one another" (Premchand 216). Premchand narrates of their true love, they were not like human being, when they were yoked to a plough or a cart and went along each one tried to

take the most weight on his own neck and both sharing everything.

Premchand depicts the cruelty of a man. Jhuri sent two of them to his brother- in-law's place. They were not willing to go to Gaya's place. They asked "why are you throwing us out?" (Premchand 217). He could not understand Bullocks feelings, they did not complain but the big question is "why have you sold us to this cruel fellow?" (Premchand 217). Anyhow two Bullocks reached new place but did not eat anything. Their hearts were heavy, everything wss new to them, new place, new home, new village and new people seemed strange to them. They discussed that "when the village went to sleep they break their tethers". They had at a redoubled strength at the movement and broke the ropes with one jerk. They reached Jhuri's house the next morning. Jhuri was happy, he ran and embraces them, he hugs and kissed. The children of the house and the village gathered and clapped hands in joy to welcome them. The children assembled and decided to honour them. They brought *rotis*, ghee, bran and hay. The third child said "they are not bullocks, they were humans in a former birth" (Premchand 218). But Jhuri's wife was so angry, she blamed the bullocks, "These ungrateful bullocks didn't work there a single day; they ran away (Premchand 218). But Jhuri could not bear this criticism.

The next day Jhuri's brother-in-law came again and took the bullocks away. He was very cruel, he treats them very badly, they were beaten, and they were given dry hay. Gaya is so cruel, Hira and Moti could not tolerate, Moti thinks that to escapes from there. Hira said, "It's useless to runs away (Premchand 220). An animal have been a lot of patient. Hira replied helplessly, "Let him –since we were born bullocks, we can't escape beating" (Premchand 220). Premchand upheld the dharma of animals, "If he hits me, I will knock down a couple of them, "No. this is not the dharma of our community" (Premchand 220). Hira

and Moti cannot tolerate torcher of Gaya. Premchand appreciates nature of small girl, when family members were eating a small girl came out side with two rotis and put one in each one's mouth. She is a daughter of Bhairon's daughter, her mother was dead and her stepmother was always beating her. Days passed away, Mote wants take revenge on them but Hira said "But it's forbidden to attack a woman have you forgotten?" (Premchand 221). At night small girl open the door and said "I will release you, runway quickly otherwise these people will kill you. Today they decided to put ropes through your nose" (Premchand 221). She undid the tether but they are not ready to run because animals are very honest than a man, they are innocent and truthful to one who helps them. Hira said, "If we run away, this poor thing will suffer tomorrow. All of will suspect her" (Premchand 222). Suddenly girl shouted "uncle's two bullocks are running away" (Premchand 222). They escaped from them but they lost their way. They were not on the road by which they had come, they passed through new village. They eat a crop of peas, stood in the field. When their stomachs were full, they enjoyed of freedom. Later they were locked up in the cattle pound.

Premchand depicts human cruelty. The two friends had the experience of not getting even a straw to eat all day. They broke a wall other animals are also stood, since half dead but donkeys remained standing. He depicted that man is so selfish but animals are not selfish. Moti broke his rope and busy breaking the rope that bound his friend. But Hira said "You go' leave me here. Perhaps we will meet again someday. But Moti said with tears in his eyes, "Do you think I am so selfish" (Premchand 226), they cannot escapes from the pound. One day infront of the pound people were gathered. There was an auction in the action, a beard fellow purchased them. The Bullocks always thinks positively, "God saved us once in the form of that girl, won't he save us now?"(Premchand 227). After

the auction, the two friends set out with the bread man. Finally they found a way of Jhuri's home and reached, a short story ends with happy.

Premchand's another important short story is "The Shroud". It is a story of son, father and daughter-in-law. Ghisu is a father; Madhave and Budhiya are husband and wife. Premchand depicts a reality of male dominate society. It always neglects and subjugated female. In this short story Budhiya was suffering from labour pain but Ghisu and Madhav are so lazy and neglects Budhiya. It was a winter night, there was a heavy cold. There was a heart-rending cries burst from her lips but they did not care her. Madhav said, "If she has to die, why doesn't she die quickly? What's the use of my going to see her?" (Premchand 269). Ghisu and Madhav were very laziest, if Ghisu worked for a day, he would take rest for three days. Madhav was so lazy, if he worked for half an hour he would sit and smoke for an hour, so no one was willing to employ them. If they had little money, they would roam about doing nothing. It was a village of peasants, there was no shortage of work in the village. In the harvest days, they collected potatoes and peas roasted and eat. When they were roasting potatoes Budhiya was dying of labour pains. These two were perhaps waiting for her to die so that they could sleep peacefully.

Premchand depicts Indian society, how male dominated society neglects a woman. Budhiya is suffering from labours pain but Madhav and Ghisu have been discussing about their past days, how they did enjoyed the dishes, they were busy to pull out the potatoes from the ashes and eat them. Ghisu recollected the landlords wedding party, dish other unrelated things. They spend whole night without glance Budhiya and shared their past experiences. Premchand depicts tragic end of women in India. Next day Madhav went inside the room he saw "his wife had turned cold. Flies were buzzing around her

face. Her eyes were set and turned upward. Her whole body was coated in dust. The baby had died in her womb." (Premchand 269). They wailing and beating their breasts, neighbours gather and they had to make arrangements for a shroud and wood. They met the landlord requested him, "Sarkar! We are ruined. Our family is destroyed. We are your slaves. Who but you can provide for her funeral now? We spent, whatever, we had on her medicines and treatment" (Premchand 270). Sarked scolded them; he took two rupees and throws down but he did not utter a word of sympathy. They collected total five rupees from others; they set out to buy a shroud from the market. Premchand described selfishness and commerciality of a man. The father and son discussed "All right, let's buy an inexpensive shroud; 'yes, it will be night by the funeral starts. Who will see the shroud at night? 'What a bad custom it is that one who didn't have a rag to cover her body in her life time must have a new shroud after death. The shroud burns with the body, after all" (Premchand 271). They wandered around the market; they went from one cloth merchant's shop to another, they saw but did not buy a shroud. They spent so much time finally they found themselves a liquor shop. They buy a bottle and dry fish, sat peacefully in the veranda starts drinking. They did not buy the shroud, Ghisu said, "What would we have got by buying a shroud? It would just have been burnt up. It wouldn't have gone along with Budhiya" (Premchand 273). They consumed puris with chutney, pickles and live, Father and Son were enjoying each sip, every one's eyes were fixed on them and they began to dance. The short story ends with that they do not have guilty of sense and feeling of deceiving woman.

Premchand depicts the reality of his contemporary society. The realed value of the Pancha's voice, their voice is 'The voice of God'. The panchas are nothing but the God, their decision is God's decision. He upheld the value of the panchas in Indian rural society. The society

respects panchas then the court. Who ever become a select as panchas, they act like a God and their judgement will be always fair. Premachand's one of the important short story is "The voice of God". In this short story Jumman Sheik and Algu Chaudhuri were intimate friends, they formed together, they did business together and take loans jointly and each trusted the other unquestioningly even they are belonging to different religion. They are like Dhuryodhana and Karna in *The Mahabharata;* they are two bodies in a one soul. When Jumman went on the Hajj, he left Algu incharge of is house, and whenever Algu went out of town, he left Jumman incharge of his house. They did not eat together, and they belonged to different religion but their way of thinking united them, they are good friends. Jumman's father was their teacher; Algu served his guru with heart and soul.

Jumman Sheikh had old maternal aunt Khala Jaan, she had little property. Jumman promised her to feed and got her property. She believed him and registered the gift deed to Jumman. Jumman's wife Kariman did not serve proper food to her and Jumman too turned hard hearted. Khala Jaan was so angry she could not tolerate. One day she said to Jumman, "Beta! I can't carry on with you. You give me money regularly and I will cook and eat on my own" (Premchand 244). But his response was negative he said gravely, "We did not know that you had conquered death"(Premchand 244) She got annoyed and threatened to convened the village the panchayat.

Several days passed. The old aunt walked with stick in hand, went around the neighbouring villages. She requests everyone finally she meets Algu and requests, "Beta, you too come to the panchayat for a little while Algu: 'what's the use of inviting me? Men will come from many villages, Khala: I have told everyone my troubles. Now it's up to them to come or not to come: Algu 'I can't mind coming but I won't open my mouth: Khala: why son? Algu: 'what

can I say? It's up to me to do as I please. Jumman is an old friend of I can't spoil my friendship with him. Khala: Beta will you refrain from telling the truth just for fear of spoiling a friendship" (Premchand 245). Premchand says morality always stands for justice, when an old aunt says, Algu did not reply anything.

That evening the panchayat convinced under a tree. Jumman Sheikh, an old aunt, Algu and other villagers gathered. The panchas took place and an old aunt pleaded her case. Premchand uplift the value of a panchas in the short story. When an old aunt pleaded her case, she signed over all her property to her nephew Jumman but now he is not served enough food and proper clothes to wear. Ramdhan Mishra is a tenants, he had been settled by Jumman in his own village. Jumman said, "The panchas decision is God's decision. Let Khala Jaan choose whomever she wants. I have no objection". (Premchand 247). An old aunt nominates Algu Chaudhuri as the chief panch. Algu did not want get into this mess, he rejects because Jumman is his good friend. Indian society believes that the God will speak through the panchas. Khala said in a grave voice, "Beta, no one sells his honour for friendship. God resides in the heart of the panch. The God speaks through the panchas", (Premchand 247). Then Algu Chanudhari took the position of the chief panch, Jumman thought that, he will sure win the day. He argued and defended himself; Jumman was still waiting for Algu's judgement. He delivered a Judgement, "The panchas have considered the matter. They think it is only fair that you give Khala Jaan a monthly allowance. We think that her property definitely yields enough profit for you to be able to do that. That's it that's our decision. If Jumman is not willing to give the allowance, the deed of gift should be considered null and void" (Premchand 249), Jumman was stunned by the decision. Other panchas praised wholeheartedly his ethical stance they said, "This is a true panchayat. It separated milk from water. The

Friendship has its place; but adhering to dharma is much more important" (Premchand 248). Here Premchand pointed that the truth is always glitter in Indian society, India stands on the strength of such truthful people. Algu and Jumman friendship disturbed a lot.

Many days passed. It takes a long time to complete a good work, but this is not true of bad deeds. Algu Chaudhuri had brought a fine pair of long horned bullocks of a good breed. From the neighbouring villages, they used to come to have a look at them. It so happened that a month after Jummans panchayat one of the bullocks died. Indian society generally believed that the God may punish to bad people. When this incident happened Jumman said to his friends, "This is the penalty for betrayal. Humans may do as they please, but God saw both good and ill" (Premchand 250). Algu searched for a match but could not find one; finally he decided to sell him to a small timber trader Samjhu Sahu in the village. He drove an ekka cart, carrying gur and ghee from the village to market but he did not serve good food. He promises to Algu to pay him in a month's time. Algu needed the money, so he didn't mind selling at a loss. Several months passed, Sahuji earned a lot but did not treat bullock properly one day he passed away on the middle of the road.

Several months passed, whenever Algu asked for the price of his bullock, Sahu and his wife would both pounce on him like aroused dogs. They blamed him, "He gave in a dead bullock and dares ask for its price! He threw dust in our eyes, tied a ruinous bullock to our hacks and thinks were complete idiots!" (Premchand 252). Finally both are agreed to convince the panchayat and accepted, whatever, the decision. The preparations for the panchayat began, from the both sides began to build their factors. The panchayat convened under the tree, i the same day the crows were holding panchayat in the fields, finally they settled the case. Premchand symbolically portrait that parrots, they

are discussing "what right human had to call them unkind when they themselves did not hesitate to betray their friendship" (Premchand 253). The Panchayat sat down, the panchas should be selected. Ramdhan Mishra said "Well Chaudhuri, whom do you nominate?" (Premchand 253). Algu said humbly "Let Samjhu Sahu Choose" (Premchand 254) He selected Jumman Shaikh. Algu did not put any objection.

Premchand highlights the importance of the chief of panch, in Indian society, it is highly respectable job. As soon as Jumman assumed the important position as the chief panch, he felt his responsibility. He thought, "I am seated on the highest seat of justice and Dharma right now. Whatever, comes out of my mouth is like a divine voice and my mental agitation should have no place in a divine pronouncement. It would not be right for me to temper with the truth in the slightest" (Premchand 254). The panchas began to question both parties for a long time, both argued on their own behalf. Finally Jumman pronounced judgement, "Sanmjhu must pay the full price for the bullock when he brought the bullock, and it was perfectly healthy. The bullock died only because it was overworked and was not fed properly" (Premchand 255). Every one stood up and said loudly "Panch Parmeshwara Ki Jai Victory to the panch who is God!" – Everyone praised him. Everyone praised "This is called justice! This is not the doing of humans; God resides in the panch. This is God's greatness! Who can turn false herd into trouth before the panch?" (Premchand 255). Both Jumman and Algu embraced. Finally Jumman said, the position of panch in Indian society, The pancha is like a God. Jumman said, "Brother, ever since you sat on my Panchayat, I became your bitter enemy but today. I realized that when one sits on the seat of the panch, one is no one's enemy and no one's friend. One thinks of nothing but justice. Today, I am convinced that God speaks in the voice of the panch" (Premchand 256). The short story ends with happy.

Premchand depicts the social reality of Indian society in his short stories.

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4

The Shroud

—Ramya B Naik

'The shroud' (1935), is the last story by Dhanpath Rai Shrivastav "Premachand" (1880-1936) father of Urdu and Hindi Short Story traditions. 'The Shroud' originally Kafaan which is also made into a film by Mrinal Sen, Premachand writes in the first three decades of the 20th century. His short stories are based upon the subjects of suppression of women, caste system, distraction of moral values, class distinction, friendship, love, and materialistic life.

'In The Shroud' the harshness and bleakness, the utter awfulness of the two characters, balanced against the sympathy we are forced to feel for them, and even a sort of morbidely comic effect–how far beyond the achievement of Premachands previous stories.

Ghisu and his son Madhav are desperately poor peasants and belong to the Chammar community, the lowest among the untouchable caste. The story is also a record of the invisible violence inflicted by the dehumanizing effect of poverty. While Madhava's wife, Budhia, was screaming in labour pain, Ghishu and Madhav sat inactive. They could not get medicines, neither a quack, for everything needs money and they were neck deep in debt in debt already yet, they knew, the society which refused them money

would help if a child was born or Budhia died, so they sat still waiting for either of the two to happen, with Budhia's death they rushed to Zamindar for help for Budhia's creamators not withstanding his detestation the Zamindar couldn't but offer a sum of two rupees because he knew it has not the right moment for giving vent to his anger or meting out punishment and Ghisu pretty soon collected a tidy sum of five rupees negotiating the hypocrisies and sentiments of a society which gave precedence to social pretensious and values like kindness sympathy donation etc over sharing resources in the real sense, Ghisu knew the society didn't care how they tired their women they were offered money not out of sympathy but because of social obligations, so if Ghisu and his son were victims of economic deprivation the civil society was a victim of social moores too that can be negotiated Madhav failed to provide Budhia even her Shroud.

Ghisu and Madhav were victims of the worst kind of economic deprivation. In his life of sixty years he had only once eaten to his stomach's full, that too in a wedding some twenty years back. Their home had no worldly possession beside a pair of clay pots. They even covered the nakedness of their bodies with a few tattered rags and went on with the business of living. Budhia suffered silently her death yet she provided the laws on which the subaltern and the master, the exploited and exploiter worked out their relations with each other. Ghisu and Madhav exploited Budhia to the extra buck, even though it cost her life, Budhia was rushed under the three forces of feudalism patriarchy and poverty.

The story has been attached by Dalit critics, on the ground that it paints on unflattering and hostile picture of two anti-heroes who are explicitly identified as chammaras. The subaltern in Premachand's story 'The Shroud' not only

resists the forces of exploitation, but subverts dominant social moores and tradition to gain an advantages over the master class, forcing them to sell out money which they wouldn't have otherwise in ordinary circumstances. This glory of victory is attended by the realization that the subaltern in them is also an exploiter of death is used for sustaining self interests.

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5

Changeless State of Dalits Depicted in Bandhu Madhav's Short Story The Poisoned Bread

—Dr. Shamala Ratnakar

The Mahars had no place in the rural economy. They had no traditional profession, no lands to till, no means of production. They had to do any available work in the village and lived on left-over food doled out by the upper castes (xIiv, Arjun Dangle).

The above lines clearly reveal the kind of life the mahars were compelled to live in the upper caste society. Bandhu Madhav, Dalit writer and social activist, chronicles the life of mahars in his short story The Poisoned Bread whose life is not different from the above lines told by Arjun Dangle. Among Dalits, there are many sub-castes in which mahars stands first and the exploitation meted out by them also stands immeasurable.

While other sub-castes got their traditional profession like mangs whose work is to make ropes the mahars were unfortunate for not having any profession of their own but to lead their life by doing some odd jobs. In addition to this they were made to fill their stomach by the left-over thrown

at them by the upper castes Hindus. In other words, in spite of hard work they were compelled to survive through begging without any self respect of their own. Bandhu Madhav in his short story The Poisoned Bread writes the story of one such mahar family who is forced to make their life through begging.

The story begins when the narrator Mhadeva recalls his meeting with his grandpa Yetalya twelve years ago at Kupad. Yetalya, being a mahar, was like seasonal worker because of no traditional profession of his own. Therefore during the harvest time Yetalya used to visit the threshing floor in search of job of winnowing and treading out of the corn. This time Yetalya takes his grandson Mhadeva with him thinking of getting more corn in return for their hard work.

Poverty was the first and foremost problem which the Dalits were suffering from since time immemorial. Due to the absence of any traditional profession, the mahars were left with no other option but to do the odd jobs given to them. In a situation like this, the whole family has to work including women and children to fill their stomach. Meanwhile the children's were treated as economic asset in the mahar family and because of this attitude only Yetalya takes Mhadeva with him by expecting more corn in return for their service. Education to children was far from their mind and their mind is fully equipped with the idea of earning at least two meals a day. In this regard, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, who fought for the betterment and upliftment of Dalits said: "Poverty and Social handicaps were the two main hurdles in the way of their education" (88, Shahare).

Earning livelihood through hard work was the main concern of Dalits. Similarly Yetalya along with his grandson goes in search of job to the threshing floor of Bapu Patil and asks for some job. But Bapu Patil teases him by asking

sarcastically whether he has come for doing any evil job. For this Yetalya replies:

> Why do you say that, Anna? I am your slave. I have come to you on purpose on hearing of the operations at your threshing floor. My lord is our bread-giver and we find it a privilege to beg for our share of corn, master. I am your begging mahar and feel proud to be so (67-68, The Poisoned Bread).

Since time immemorial the upper castes have relegated Dalits to a very low position and in the name of religion the upper castes never allowed Dalits to come out of their low status. They were made to feel proud of their slavery state which was very inhuman. Similarly Yetalya also feels proud to be the slave of Bapu Patil whose only concern was to earn some corn for that day's meal. But Bapu Patil went on showing his cruelty by humiliating Yetalya and even insults him by taking the issue of Dalits temple entry. Dalits struggle for their basic rights was not tolerable to the upper caste people like Bapu Patil because they were afraid of losing their so called upper position. Because of this Dalits were made to live as lower caste by utilizing religion as their tool. Meanwhile Bapu Patil says, "...because of you—the mahars and mangs- have profaned religion, and abandoning caste, have defiled lord vithoba of pandharpur" (168, Arjun Dangle). By hearing these insulting words Yetalya's grandson got enraged and replied strongly:

> Patil, will you kindly tell me what you mean when you accused us of forgetting religion, abandoning our caste and of polluting the god? And if the religion can't tolerate one human being treating another simply as a human being, what's the use of such an inhuman religion? And if our mere touch pollutes the gods, why were the mahars and mangs created at all? And who, may I know, who indeed, created them? And would you please tell me the name of the god whom the mahars and mangs can claim as their own? "(168).

The above words are not just the question put forth by Mhadeva to Bapu Patil, but the entire Dalit community is asking the same question to the upper castes. Because in the name of religion the upper castes have made Dalits mere puppets in their hands and claims hindu scriptures as the reason behind their treatment of untouchables. In this regard Sharankumar Limbale in his book *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature: History, Controversies and Considerations* opine:

> The Hindu religious order has considered the Dalits shadow, touch and speech to be impure. It has regarded them untouchable and guilty by birth. Dalits should not accumulate property or wear gold ornaments, they should live outside the village and own only donkeys and dogs. Furthermore they should partake of food only in clay utensils, use only shrouds of clothing and take inauspicious and crude names. Hindu scriptures are replete with numerous such commands (30).

If the Hindu scriptures command such rules and regulations to the lower castes like Dalits then the question arises is: what is the use of following such religion which treats Dalits very inhumanly? In other words Dr.B.R.Ambedkar claims Hinduism as a cause for the suffering and exploitation of Dalits and also condemns Hinduism in Annihilation of Caste as: "a religion of rules, compendium of rituals, regulation which are based on the caste ideology of hierarchy and untouchability (120)". In short Dr.B.R.Ambedkar says:

> Millions of people in the midst of civilization are still in a savage state and are leading the life of hereditary criminals. But the Hindus have never felt ashamed of it. This is a phenomenon which in my view is unparalleled (52).

This kind of shameful life has been led by mahars from a very long time and the situation of Yetalya is not different from other mahars. Though his grandson rebels against Bapu Patil's humiliating nature, Yetalyta continues his begging before him for a job. Finally he succeeds in getting a job and asks his grandson to accompany him in

doing the work to get more shares in return. Though they were fortunate to get some work, they were unfortunate for not getting anything in return for their endless toil.

Though Yetalya was very humble and ready to accept his nature or slave his grandson Mhadeva was of rebellious nature. Due to this in spite of their hard labor Bapu Patil refuses to give any corn in return for their service. Disappointed by this grandpa gets ready to go home but suddenly notices stale and rancid pieces of bread which was scattered on the ground in front of the oxen. Yetalys felt happy by seeing those stale bread pieces and this clearly depicts the poor condition of his family which is struggling very hard to meet their daily needs. Due to this horrible condition it is rightly said that: "as the Chamar has his eye on the chappal, so does the mahar on the stale bread" (171-78). Grandpa pleads Bapu Patil for those bread crumbs which might have refused by oxen to eat. This particular incident illustrates clearly the condition of mahars and one can easily say that they were treated worse than animals.

Utter poverty of Yetalya has driven him to such a situation that though he knows that the bread is not good for eating, he begs for it with the intention of trying to feed his family with that stale bread at least. With the permission of Bapu Patil Yetalya collects them as a reward for his hard work but his grandson gets angry on Patil for treating them worse than animals. Regarding this Yetalya says:

> Mhadeva, will the mahars and mangs never be happy? What a humiliating life we live! Do you think I feel happy about being oppressed by the landlords and the rest of the villagers? I too want to retaliate and have a good fight for the humiliation and the injustice they have piling on us. But, my boy, I am helpless! I see no end to this suffering... (172).

It is this helplessness which led mahars to live under the control of upper caste religious orders. But Mhadeva tries to convince his grandpa regarding their inhuman condition and explains him not to get their share by begging instead

to get it as their right. In other words Mhadeva succeeds in realizing Yetalya about their rights and not to follow blindly without any question the rules and regulations of the upper caste Hindus. Greatly convinced by this Yetalya feeling ashamed of himself and in frustration throws the bread pieces to dogs instead of taking it to home. But this realization of Yetalya was of no use because as soon as he throws bread pieces to dogs his wife comes running out of the house by scolding Yetalya for giving food to dogs while his family members are starving. She collects and cleans all the bread pieces and prepares supper for family. This act of Yetalya's wife made her to regret a lot because it was this stale bread pieces which led to the death of Yetalya. In other words the bread turned poisonous and it became poisoned bread which resulted in vomiting and dysentery. When doctor told this to Yetalya he, in great amazement says: "what? You say the crumbs had turned to poison? It was in fact poison? Poisoned bread...? Really poison?" (174).

Inviting his death which was at the threshold of his house Yetalya calls his grandson and by gaining all his strength and will power says:

> ...never depend on the age-old bread associated with our caste. Get as much education as you can. Take away this accursed bread from the mouth of mahars. This poisonous bread will finally kill the very humanness of man... (174).

In short, Yetalya wanted his fellow mahars to give up doing odd jobs and getting invaluable things in return but to educate themselves to lead a life with dignity and identity of their own. He wanted Dalits to renounce the life of begging and to take up the life of self-respect which was possible only through education. In other words education is the only weapon in the hands of Dalits to carve a respectable life for themselves with an identity of their own.

Mhadeva is narrating this story which has happened twelve years ago but the story ends during the harvest time which was the beginning of the story which shows

that even after twelve years the life of mahars has not changed but has surrounded itself around the threshing floor by doing the same winnowing and treading corn. But compared to earlier times the life of Dalits has improved to some extent and with education the Dalits have gained respectable position equivalent to upper caste Hindus. However that does not mean that they are living equally with upper castes without any oppression and suffering. Dalits life with equal rights in India is possible only through the removal of caste system completely. Unfortunately such a thing is highly impossible and the only solution to the problem and suffering of Dalits can come through the change in the mindset of upper castes and treat Dalits as their fellow human beings.

Through Yetalya, Bandhu Madhav in his short story The Poisoned Bread has tried to present the readers the life of mahars and their endless suffering through generations. He depicts the view point of two generations one is Yetalya who is old and abide by the rules and regulations put forth by upper castes in the name of religion and the other is his grandson Mhadeva who rebels against such religion calling it as inhuman and also succeeds in making Yetalya to realize his inhuman and shameful situation. Unfortunately he fails to do the same with his community because he alone finds it difficult to do it without the support of others. After twelve years also he is in the same situation in spite of the education he gained. To conclude one can say that the long tradition of Hinduism and caste system cannot be eradicated with the help of education. Therefore it can be said that change in the mindset of upper castes by accepting Dalits to their fold by treating them as fellow human beings who were born of same flesh and blood can bring some changes in the life of Dalits who want to live a life of dignity. Even to this day Dalits are eagerly waiting for that day to come by keeping the word "hope" in their mind and our wish is, that "hope" should come as soon as possible to make Dalits life meaningful.

6

Psychological Implications in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's— The Yellow Wallpaper

—Dr. Shamala Ratnakar

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, writer, lecturer, social critic and feminist, lived at a time of tremendous upheaval when the role of women was metamorphosing. Gilman advocated revised roles for women. She believed, should be on much more equal economic, social, and political footing with men. Born on 3 July, 1860 in the New England, Connecticut, she was the great niece of Henry Ward Beecher and his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of Uncle Tom's Cabin). She had a difficult childhood. Her father, Frederick Beecher Perkins abandoned the family, leaving Charlotte's mother to raise two children on her own. Gilman married artist Charles Stetson in 1884. The couple had a daughter named Katherine. "The Yellow Wallpaper" a short story by Gilman was first published in New England magazine in January 1892. The descent into madness of a young middle-class woman and her treatment by a neglectful husband is well portrayed. Gilman based the story on her own experiences. She suffered postpartum depression and her physiatrist Dr S. Weir Mitchell prescribed her 'rest cure'. Weir Mitchell's treatment plays a significant role in the context of the narrative.

Presented in the first person, the story is a collection of journals entries written by a woman whose physician husband, John has confined her to the bedroom of a palatial mansion that he rents for summer. She is forbidden from working and has to hide her journal from him, so she can recuperate from what he calls a 'temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency', a diagnosis common to women during that period. On the doctors'advice, the narrator's husband orders her to rest as much as possible, and picks a room in the house for the two of them. The narrator feels vaguely uncomfortable with the estate, but obeys the husband. She also obeys him when he chooses a large airy room on the top floor instead of the smaller, prettier room on the groundfloor that she prefers.

The narrator would like to spend her time writing, but her husband and brother think this is a terrible idea. She is living in a house which she feels is eerie, in a room she hasn't picked and is forbidden from engaging in the one activity she enjoys. No wonder she becomes absolutely obsessed with the yellow wallpaper in her room. She begins fanatically tracing the pattern of the wallpaper and soon becomes convinced that there is a woman trapped within the paper.

Though the narrator feels that activity, freedom and interesting work would help her condition, John scoffs at her. He belittles both her illness and her thoughts and concerns in general. "John laughs at me so, but that is so in marriage", she says. She has internalised her husband's domination and the treatment meted out towards her, thereof. So she also says "but what can one do", this again shows her helplessness. Although the narrator repeatedly asks John to change the treatment over the course of the story, he refuses to acknowledge her requests, believing that he had total authority over the situation. This is also a reflection of the society conditions of the time, but

either way, John abuses his power as both a husband and physician and forces the narrator to remain in an oppressive situation from which her only escape is insanity.

As the weeks pass, the narrator becomes good at hiding her journal and her thoughts. She continues to long for more stimulating company and activity. The wallpaper becomes more ugly and menacing. She also remembers her childhood when she was able to work herself into a terror. The bedroom could have been a nursery for young children. Furniture is heavy and fixed in place. Again as she explains the design of the paper Jennie, her sister-in-law who acts as the housekeeper interrupts her.

The narrator has become totally lonely and says she has become found of the wallpaper. It slowly begins to take the shape of a face and then later the whole shape of a woman. It resembles a woman "stooping down and creeping behind the paper". The patterns keep changing according to daylight and moonlight hence the narrator has sleepless nights watching these images. She is growing afraid of John and is not able to speak her mind with him. She grows more morbid and her conditions worsens. Now she smells a distinct odour of the wallpaper. She tries to analyse the smell, that it is similar to the colour of the paper, a yellow smell! Unknowingly in her imagination, everything has a dull colour and smell. Although the yellow colour of the wallpaper has associations with illness, its most developed motif is the conflict between sunlight and moonlight. In Gilman's story, sunlight is associated with John's ordered, dominating schedule and the rational sphere of men. John prescribes something for the narrator for every waking hour while he goes about his daily rounds, forcing her to take on the same order and control that defines his life. Then again the woman behind shakes the pattern and tries to come out. The narrator connects her own feelings with the woman imprisoned behind the paper. The narrator can sense and feel the wallpaper strangling

her. She internalises her husband's values, so she condoles and compromises with her husband instead of questioning him and standing up for herself. Writing actually relieves her from her tensions but that very thing is denied to her.

John fails to understand her problem, and keeps denying when told about the woman in the wallpaper. He insists that the holiday and inactivity is actually helping his wife. The narrator finds it difficult to talk to John. In fact she internalises that John is wise and so what he says must be true. John is out of town most of the time due to which he cannot understand the gravity of his wife's illness or how quickly it is deteriorating.

> I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition. But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself--before him, at least, and that makes me very tired. I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.(3, Wallpaper)

The contrast is set between the husband who is wise, strong-willed, logical, and rational with a strong personality and the creative sensitive and emotional values of the wife. The role of the women in the 1890s and 1910s is well defined in the domestic sphere."The Yellow Wallpaper" offers a compelling study of Gilman's own feminism and a critique of the defined roles of women. Men perpetrated an ideological prison that subjected and silenced women. This ideology, true womanhood, legitimized the victimization of women. Domesticity and purity were the central tenets of true womanhood. The yellow wallpaper is symbolic of true womanhood, which binds women to the home and family.

In every section we see a step by step descent of her falling, deeper and deeper into insanity. Through her imagination we can perceive a reflection of her feelings. The woman behind wallpaper wants to escape from the prison so too does the narrator who wants to escape from

the patriarchal society rules and norms. She reverses her initial feeling of being watched by the wallpaper and starts actively studying and decoding its meaning. She untangles its chaotic pattern and locates the figure of a woman struggling to break free from the bars in the pattern. The narrator starts to associate herself with the woman in the wall, locked and imprisoned. She starts to creep on the floor. John arrives and starts knocking at the door. Finally we see the narrator creeping on the floor when John opens the door. He faints looking at his wife. She creeps over him, signifying that she rises over him. A victory over her husband at the expense of her sanity.

The horror of the story is that the narrator must lose herself to understand herself. She has untangled the pattern of her life, but she has torn herself apart in getting free of it. The narrator is not named; this is representative of how insignificant a woman is considered in patriarchal society. It could also be that she is representative of all the women. In verbal irony, words are frequently used to convey the exact opposite of their literal meaning, such as when one person responds to another's mistake by saying "very nice."The narrator uses verbal irony often especially in reference to her husband 'Johnlaughs at me of course, but one expects that in marriage'. The wallpaper to become symbolic throughout the story,it becomes a text that she has to beinterpreted. At first it is only 'unpleasant' ripped and soiled and an 'unclean yellow'. Later it becomes a figure of a woman trapped and imprisoned. Wallpaper is domestic and humble and Gilman skilfully uses this nightmarish, hideous paper symbolise the domestic life that traps so many women. The narrator's eventual insanity is a product of the repression of their imaginative power, not the expression of it. She longs for an outlet which will give her 'relief' to her mind. Women were socially conditioned to control their imagination so when the protagonist rips down the wallpaper, she destroys her prison merging

herself with the woman in the wallpaper; finally releasing the controlled rage of women in society. For Gilman, a mind that is kept in a state of forced inactivity is doomed to self-destruction. Gilman herself acknowledges, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a fictionalized version of her break down and treatment, with the ending suggesting the outcome for Gilman had she continued Mitchell's regimen. She believed lack of autonomy is detrimental to a woman's mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

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7

Raja Rao as a Short Story Writer – An Analysis

—Dr. Shamala Ratnakar

When you can't write a book in English that will not stand the test of India in India, then it is not worth writing.[1]

Raja Rao wrote his first short story in the early 1930's. He does not seem to have evinced any interest in this form after Independence. He has but one collection of short stories — The Cow of the Barricade and Other Stories. The book contains less than a dozen stories. Yet he has been accepted by all discerning critics as among our most significant short story writers.

The reason is not far to seek. Each of his stories is the product of painstaking study and observation. The experience of a life-time is packed into his stories, and his sincere efforts to evolve a language that can complete the Indian atmosphere lends an irrepressible charm to them. Raja Rao's is no mean contribution to the glory of Indian Short Story in English.

The greatest asset of Raja Rao's short stories is their fidelity to the typical Indian thought and culture. The significant truths of his stories — whether they be portraits of the widows Javni and Akkayya, the simplicity of Narsiga, the all-purifying qualities of the cow, or the remorse-stricken condition of Kanakapala—are all rooted

in our perennial beliefs which date back to the days of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The setting is almost always rural and the personae simple, straightforward rustics moved by primary emotions. Yet, taken together, the nine stories open out before us a panorama of our cultural heritage whose origins are in the misty past and which is ever undergoing a process of modification yet remaining essentially unchanged. Even those stories inspired by the Nationalist Movement—Narsiga and The Cow of the Barricades—are no exception to this.

Prof. A. R. Wadia observes: ... Indians have adapted the art of short story to Indian conditions and used it as a vehicle of new ideas and a means of accelerating reform'.[2] Almost as an instance for this, he refers to the story of Javni:

> "His Javni is a delightful story of an untouchable woman, widowed, and despised by all. She is employed in a family where she is treated with affection, with a certain amount of consideration, but never allowed to forget that she was an untouchable. Then comes in Ramappa, the brother of the mistress of the house. He comes with new ideas and he could not bear to see the indignities heaped upon her even in this 'affectionate 'family, and Javni is touched by his kindness. The sorrow of parting is portrayed in touching colours."[3]

Raja Rao himself superscribes the story with a couplet from Saint Kanakadas:

> Caste and Caste and Caste, you say, What caste has he who knoweth God?[4]

Javni earns a pittance of just one rupee a month. She has to take her food in the byre where it is usually kept. And she has to eat in the dark as oil is too expensive. Ramappa feels for her:

> "Had not the Lord said: 'Whenever there is misery and ignorance, I come ? 'Oh, when will that day come and the Gonch of Knowledge blow ?"[5]

Javni is no doubt sad, for she cannot afford oil, but she certainly is not unhappy. In fact she is proud of her

position as the best servant that ever served a Revenue Inspector. She is proud that the people speak of her, 'Javni, she is good like a cow.'[6] And what more, she is even proud of her mistress who to her is a veritable goddess. Ramappa is irritated that this goddess keeps Javni in the byre, but he fails to see the sincerity of his sister's description of Javni as 'almost a mother.'[7] When Sita says 'But affection does not ask you to be irreligious,'[8] he gets into a fury; but Javni understands both of them perfectly. To her, they are just two loving souls. It is she indeed that 'knoweth God 'and caste alone can cast no shadow of misery over her. The story has much more than mere new ideas and reformist zeal.

If, in Javni, Raja Rao had a mission of reform, he does not succeed fully, although the story is interspersed with explicit and vehement arguments against caste and irreligion. Akkayya, on the other hand, the story of the other widow — this time from the highest class — is artistically most satisfying. In it the author obtrudes little but the underlying argument for a thorough overhauling of the Indian attitude to the widow is too strong to be missed. Unlike in Javni, where the widow inspires Raja Rao to a vehement condemnation of the untouchable system through Ramappa, nobody speaks for Akkayya here. Akkayya herself is the abstract widow problem and her very life a vehement argument against the evil system:

> "....her horoscope foretold a most brilliant marriage".[9] She was married at the age of eight or nine and soon after her husband died of 'some fever';'. .they wept and they moaned for a few days and after that everything went on as usual. Akkayya did not understand anything of it and she perfectly enjoyed the doll-show — for it was Dassera then.'[10]

When she came of age Akkayya had her disturbing moments and once past this period of torture, to herself as well as to others, she tried to find solace in the orphan children God so readily supplied her with. 'That was her Karma!'[11]

Akkayya's happiness, we should remember, is not the contented happiness of Javni in the byre, but a helpless resignation to the inevitable. Javni is loving and is loved whereas, Akkayya, though loving, is only tolerated. Her last days, when she is bed-ridden with a 'bad disease 'and 'stinks like a manure pit '[12] is only a clever symbolisation of her whole life full of torture. It is not Akkayya who stinks, but the world that is so inhuman!

If in Javni and Akkayya our cultural inheritance, in its welcome as well as unwelcome aspects, is studied around the theme of social reform, it gets a stranger field, the political atmosphere of the pre-Independence days, to reveal itself out, in the stories In Khandesh, Narsiga, and The Cow of the Barricades. As in the widow-stories, even here Raja Rao shows extreme sense of sensibility, not blindly adhering to the old rituals and formalities but giving a significance to some of the age-old practices like cow-worship, or seeing the presence of God in the genuine leader.

In Khandesh is a witty and energetic satire on the defunct feudal system trying to pop up its lifeless head again, as well as on the forced loyalty expected by the British Raj. The story circles round the hurly— burly in a village near which the Maharaja (in actuality, just a pawn in the hands of the British Sovereign) was supposed to pass in a train —the elaborate arrangements, including the silliest, of asking the village elders to present a guard of honour to the king with their backs to him as the train passes by, because the Patel explains:

> 'You know how some devilish, prostitute-born scoundrels tried to put a bomb beneath the train of the Representative of the Most High across the seas'[13]

To which, butts in Pandopant, the city-spoilt,

'Yes, I have heard of it in the city. They said it just missed him.'[14]

Raja Rao's attack on blind attachment to false values attains a scathing sharpness in his description of Dattopant, as he, blindly rushing in the all-consuming rain towards the train to show his allegiance to the Maharaja, is squashed by the train itself with a thud:

> 'Clutter clutter Clutter clutter 'The train! The train!shrieked Dattopant and plunged into the storm '...
>
> 'Clutter clutter clutter there the train!
>
> 'Dattopant jumped forward and the train squashed him with a thud.

'It was a ballast train. The Viceroy's special followed it. Special trains like kings need heralds. Life is not bought in the market.'[15]

But what if one Dattopant is squashed, a hundred Govindopants continue to remain, and see the Maharaja — 'He was godlike — like Raja Sivaji.'[16] Tradition, indeed, dies hard.

Clearly inspired by the Nationalist zeal are the stories Narsiga and The Cow of the Barricades; both pictures of the all-permeating spirit of the Gandhian revolution felt against a background of the saner and the more beautiful aspects of our past tradition —simplicity and faith.

Narsiga, by far, is typically Indian. Narsiga the orphan shepherd symbolises the deep influence Gandhi had in almost mysteriously moving the hearts of even the remotest and most ignorant of villagers without ever meeting him. The simple-hearted shepherd boy is associated with an ashram run by a Gandhian leader. The story pictures how this boy learns the significance of freedom and love for one's mother country. And to him, Gandhiji, determined to free the Mother from the clutches of the red-man, almost attains divine heights. When his teacher tells him: 'Speak the truth and don't be cruel to anyone he wants to know where the temple of this saint is! He hates the red man because 'The red man rules us.

He takes away all our gold, and all our food, and he allows the peasants to starve and the children to die milkless'.[18] Mahatma Gandhi would drive out this Ravana and set free the mother Sita. Narsiga goes into ecstasies as the news that Gandhi is released from prison spreads:

> 'The Mahatma is released. Leave the fields. Leave the fields and rejoice. The Mahatma, you know, is going to fly in the air today like Goddess Sita when she was going back from Lanka with her husband Rama. He is going to fly in the air in a chariot of flowers drawn by four horses, four White horses....' and dancing round and round himself he fell on the grass and rolled.[19]

In these admirably living words Raja Rao has captured the heartthrobs of every Indian of the days of the Gandhian struggle. Narsiga is undoubtedly the best example of Raja Rao's ability to capture a whole society with sustained brilliance: the story is a complete picture of the changing times of the Gandhian revolution—Gandhi touched not merely the political but the social life too of his countrymen. His fight against poverty, untouchability, drinking and illiteracy are all artistically taken up with the thread of the narrative most naturally—

> 'They sit every evening at lighting time in the verandah of the central building, and there they learn alphabets and words.'[20]

The Cow of the Barricades, the title story, is another study of the Nationalist Movement. In the cow Gauri, Raja Rao presents a powerful yet a most tender symbol of Mother India herself, reflecting the oneness of the country and all its salient values. Unlike Narsiga, which is a general picture of the Gandhian sway over the masses, The Cow of the Barricades studies a symbolic struggle against the red man: a fight in which the red man, with his men from Peshawar and Pindi, and 'with guns to the left and guns to the right'[21] finds himself faced with the Cow, Gauri. Gauri inspires his soldiers too with a feeling of patriotism and they shouted out, Victory to the Mahatma! Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai!and joined up with the crowd. But their chief, the red man saw this and fired a shot. It went

through Gauri's head, and she fell a vehicle of God among lowly men.[22]

The fall of Gauri is a signal victory for Gandhian methods of peace and non-violence. The millmen and workers had built up the barricade against the advice of the master, and the Cow, Gauri, had to pay for their folly:

'Only the Master knows where she is. He says: 'Gauri is waiting in the Middle Heavens to be born. She will be reborn when India sorrows again before She is free.'[23]

Narsiga and The Cow of the Barricades are evident proof of Raja Rao's own involvements in the freedom struggle and the Nationalist upsurge.

Of the other stories in the collection, The True Story of Kanakapala, Protector of Gold, and Companions, are based on popular snake myths:

> 'The serpent is a friend or an enemy. If he is a friend, he lives with you, guarding your riches, protecting your health, and making you holy, and if he is an enemy, he slips through the kitchen gutter or through the granary tiles, or better still through the byre's eaves, and rushing towards you, he spreads his hood and bhoos and flings himself at you, and if he is a quarter-of-an-hour one, you die in a quarter-of-an-hour, a three-fourths-of- an-hour-one, you die in three-fourths of an hour, and you may know it by the number of stripes he has on his hood, for one means quarter of an hour, two half an hour, and three three-fourths, but beyond that you can never live.'[24]

In both Kanakapala and Companions, the snake is a friend. In Kanakapala, the snake is the protector of gold, but once as he was away to have his feed, an attempt was made to find the hidden gold, and unable to protect the treasure anymore, and filled with remorse, he entered the temple, and

> "he went round and round the god and goddess once, twice, thrice, and curling himself up at the foot of the Divine Couple, swallowed his tail and died For is it not said, a snake loves death better than an undutiful life?"[25]

Kanakapala is a story that could be picked up by the dozen from our legends and myths. But for the contemporary names and to a large extent, setting, it could be conveniently placed among the stories of yore. The charm of the story lies in its homely narration, its vivid picturisation of the inevitable hatred among kinsmen for treasure and in its utter simplicity.

Companions is another similar tale with the snake as a friend, capturing all the beauty and simplicity of folklore. Moti Khan, the snake charmer is made to think, by the snake, only of God until he finds Him.

If Kanakapala and Companions almost read like parables, The Little Gram Shop and A Client are realistic picturisations of the present world scenes. The Little Gram Shop is the narration of the gradual but sure progress from almost destitution to a state of well-to-do of the bania couple Motilal and Beti Bai. It is a vivid presentation of the bania exploiting the needs of his clients, living in squalor and dirt, and inviting the wrath and curses of everyone; but his money grows, and that is all that matters. The story of the bania couple, as told by Narasimha to Ananda is not only typical of a South Indian's attitude to a bania but of Raja Rao's own triumphant experimentation with the language to represent the South Indian lower middle class society 'Then you do not know the story ?' 'No.'

'Then I'll tell you!' cried Narasimha triumphant, and this is what he told him. 'That Motilal, the wretched bania, was poor as a cur in a pariah street. A copper pot in his hand, with nothing to wear except the rags they had on them, he and his wife Beti Bai started from their little village in Gujarat, when no body knows but it must have been some fifteen, twenty or forty years ago. They tramped from village to village, singing and begging, eating the food they got, and knotting in the doles they received. And within a year or two they had actually managed to save hundred rupees, yes ten times ten, a hundred rupees.

Now with that sum in hand, they had only to find a town to settle down in.... 'So, after many months' continued Narasimha, 'still begging and still wandering, sick or lame, they reached Hyderpore. They found that dirty hovel they now live in. It had neither roof nor walls. They went to the owner and asked him for an honest deal. He was but too happy to get rid of it. And with the necessary hagglings he was willing to part with it for—how much do you think? — fifty rupees, a damned pittance of fifty rupees. They bought it, and while they were trying to put up the wall, they still sang and begged. Once a dog begins to eat filth', said Narasimha contemptuously 'you cannot ask him to stop. So after a month's work—still begging—they were able to have a thatch over their heads. Then with the rest of the money they went and bought a few seers of gram and sugar and thus started their shop. Now, as everybody knows, they are overflowing with money, and yet how they live, these dogs, these curs, they live like pariah's pigs....' [26]

A Client, strangely out of tune with the other stories, is yet a graphic picture of an inevitable South Indian scene. Treated with a gentle humour, it portrays Nanjundayya, laughed at by everyone but equally in demand all the same, for his profession is to trap suitable matches for marriageable girls. Nanjundayya and the like of him are to be seen even today every where, being considered their benefactors by parents of girls who have come of age. The tale brings home, with all vividness, the Kannada saying, 'Tell a thousand lies, but get them married.'

What first strikes a reader of Raja Rao is his slender output. Tagore has written no less than ninety four stories. Anand and Narayan have been equally prolific. Nor do they, as does Raja Rao, restrict themselves to a particular section of the human world. Tagore presents a whole cross-section of humanity—the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the peasant and the city-dweller, the hypocrite and the innocent. Anand has a rich variety

too! He has a thorough knowledge of the rural as well as the urban life, and can portray the various strata of society, from that of a Maharaja to that of a barber boy with equal felicity. As for Narayan, he has innumerable sketches of the various facets of human character. Raja Rao, on the other hand, primarily concerns himself with the simple rustic, and even if, as in A Client, he depicts a college student in Bangalore, the boy has nothing of the sophistications of the city about him ; he smells from head to foot of that gullibility which is associated with the village bom. Raja Rao exhibits surprisingly few themes too: of the nine stories in the collection, two are on widows, three reflecting the Nationalist upsurge of the Gandhian days, and two based on popular snake myths. In his stories again he seems to have kept romantic love, that eternal topic of writers, at more than arm's length; and he exhibits little or no interest in the innocent world of children. Yet he has achieved something which the others, for all their prolific writing, have not been able to achieve consistently; it is that his nine stories reflect the essential India more fully than the writings of any other Indian Short Story writer in English do.

More than others, Raja Rao is essentially an Indian in his writings. His stories stand testimony to his deep roots in the ancient Indian cultural heritage. Speaking of his writings, Raja Rao said once,

> 'I should say that the greatest influence on my life was that of the Sanskrit classics ... I go back to the Sanskrit classics for getting inspiration, whether it is the Mahabharata, the Ramayana or Shankara—these are the things that have inspired me the most.' [27]

The narration of his stories often reminds one of the Upanishadic parables and the teachings of the Gita as well. Many a sentence, such as 'Therefore it is said, The Mahatma may be all wrong about politics, but he is right about the fullness of love in all creatures — the speechful and the mute'[28]

'For man and serpent are friends, and Moti Khan found God '[29] have the finality of an Upanishadic statement about them.

The pure Indianness of Raja Rao's stories springs from his narrative technique as well as from his consummate skill in evolving a language flexible enough not only to express the nuances of Indian life and temperament but powerful enough to evoke vivid pictures of the Indian scene before the eye of the reader's mind.

In general, Raja Rao's narrative technique gets its inspiration from the legend and folklore which are a part of our tradition. 'The form he experiments with here is the folk tale or the popular legend with all its simplicity and credulity, its myth-making power, and the strong moralistic substratum on which it is, in its popular wisdom, often grounded.'[30] The Raja Rao story is true to the spirit of the folk tale and interprets the simple joys and sorrows of a peasant people:

> 'Javni had four sisters and two brothers, of whom only her brother Bhima remained. She loved her parents, and they loved her too; and, when she was eighteen, she was duly married to a boy whom they had chosen from Malkad. The boy was good and affectionate, and he never once beat her. He too was a washerman, and 'What do you think '?said Javni proudly, 'he washed clothes for the. Maharaja, when he came here 'And she continued.... One day, however, as the gods decided it, a snake bit him while he was washing clothes by the river, and, in spite of all the magic that the barber Subba applied, he died that very evening, crying to the last, 'Javni, Javni, my Javni'.[31]

Raja Rao also exhibits exquisite myth-making powers which give his stories the verve and vitality of the folk tale:

'And when children cry, you say, 'Moti Khan will cure you, my treasure,' and they are cured.[32]

Or,

'It went through Gauri's head, and she fell a victim of God among lowly men. 'But they said blood did not gush

out from the head but only between the forelegs, from the thickness of her breast.'[33]

Raja Rao has imbibed, to the best of advantage, the permanently appealing elements of the folk tale and the popular legend—

Speaking about the languages of his writings, Raja Rao once remarked. 'I think I am interested in making the English language yield to the Indian needs-'[34] The language of his short story is a happy fulfilment of this purpose of his. He has evolved a language which springs from the purely rural, and therefore natural, life and his words and phrases more than describe a scene or an incident; they throw into relief the Indian scene in all its colour and beauty and simplicity as well as in its heat and dirt and squalor. He translates oaths, adages, and common sayings from his mother tongue, Kannada, but the consummate skill he has achieved in giving them all a naturalness has rendered them valuable contributions to the English language. 'Prostitute-born scoundrels 'the bhus-bhus of a snake', 'a pau of dal', 'you ruin-of- a-house '—these can never be adequately translated into English; and it is precisely these that present in the full the India that we know. And, whenever, Raja Rao uses them he does'not sound artificial at all. Indeed, language in him is least obtrusive: we see India, we meet Indains, and we share with them their joys and sorrows. Language almost disappears from the scene, as for instance, we read:

> 'You know, in the Vision-House, since the good old father, Rama-krishnayya died they had been trying to murder one another— Oh! to have had a father with a heart pure as the morning lotus, so pious, so generous, and venerable as a saint, that such a father should have children like this! Shiva, Shiva, bestow unto us Thy light! Well, after- all, my son, who can save us from our Karma ?'

Very often Raja Rao puts in a typically Indian expression without our being conscious of it unless we look at it with a critical eye, as in, 'They sit every evening at

lighting time.' Lighting time is a translation of a Kannada expression referring to late evening when people start lighting their oil lamps-

Raja Rao exhibits his talent for powerful description later to be seen so often in his maturer works:

> 'From the opening in the roof, the sunshine poured like boiling pus—thick, steaming, white. The whole heaven is a hellish whito bubo, he used to say. How it pours and pours—nothing but pus. It rains pus. And the earth—it drinks the pus, imbibes it eagerly, avidly, sucking..'

In passages like these a strength, a vigour, and a symbolic power is to be seen, which is normally to be expected in the Western masters of the form. Perhaps, to the man abroad, his stories may prove hard nuts to crack, being so deeply Indian in their content and language.

Raja Rao stands out among the Indian Short Story Writers in English in more ways than one. He combines the best elements of the traditional story with the vigour of a contemporary one. He brings together the realism of Anand, the delightful sympathy of Tagore, the ease of narration of Narayan and the objectivity of a philosopher; and with a mellow fidelity of approach to details all his own, he produces a tale at once convincingly realistic and charmingly appealing.

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8

Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl": An Analysis

—Dr. Shamala Ratnakar and Vijayalakshmi Nayak

Jamaica Kincaid is one of the most prominent writers from the Caribbean who has creatively written short stories on gender issues. She is an Antiguan-American novelist, essayist and short story writer who writes with simplicity."Girl" was first published in June 26, 1978 issue of 'The New Yorker'. More than a dozen short stories by Jamaica Kincaid followed in the same magazine. "Girl" later appeared in Kincaid's collection of stories, *At the Bottom of the River*(1983).The stories were marked by a lyrically poetic, incantatory, rhythmic voice.

Most of Kincaid's writings show a hint of autobiographical elements, hence a brief history of the author's life becomes necessary. Kincaid was bornas Elaine Cynthia Potter Richardsonin Antigua, which was a part of British Empire. Kincaid was an only child until she was nine, at which time the first of her three brothers was born. Until their birth, Kincaid had enjoyed the sole attention of her mother. With the arrival of her brothers, Kincaid's relationship with her mother changed dramatically. She fled from her native land of Antigua, changed her name before she became the most important female Caribbean writer. At the age of 17, with a growing ambivalence for

her family and a rising contempt for the subservience of the Antiguans to British colonialist rule, Kincaid left Antigua, bound for New York and a job as an au pair. Her relation with her mother was strained and difficult. The personal nature of so much of Kincaid's fiction is one of its salient features, and she admits that her difficult relationship with her own mother inspired her writing. Most of her writing focuses on this matter and on the West Indies.

The short story "Girl"is only 650 words without a traditional plot, without action, without character descriptions and just two voices. The first thing to appeal to the fancy of the reader is the rhythm of the dialogues. It is almost poetic. Like Kincaid's most short stories 'Girl' is extremely brief and is almost a monologue, of a mother with just one or two interruptions by the girl. This girl is the 'girl' of the title, who might be the daughter. The reader can only assume so, as the relationship is stated nowhere in the prose.

Only two voices and it takes the reader a while to figure out that they are mother and daughter. Kincaid skilfully manages to bring out larger issues in his short piece. The difficulty of mother-daughter relationships, femininity and its contradictions, patriarchy, adolescent sexuality, legacy of colonialism are some of the issues that emerge out her.

The mother does most of the talking, her voice being the predominant voice. The daughter is the silent listener, the hidden protagonist. The daughter's voice is hardly heard. She interrupts only twice, once to defend herself from her mothers accusations and once to ask about her doubt.

The mother directs her daughter as to how she has to live as a respectable woman. The story begins abruptly with the central voice that of the mother,

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; Wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; Don't walk barehead in the hot sun; Cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil;Soak your little clothes right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gumon it, because that way it won't hold upwell after a wash...

All the sentences are separated by semi colon and the girl's responses are in italics to differentiate it from the mother's speech. Further, it can be noted that the mother gives practical advice and at the same time instructs her daughter on how to live a more meaningful and fulfilling life. What stands out in these instructions is the repressive ideas of an older generation which does not seem to appeal to the young girl. The continuous narration is more a recollection of the serval instructions given to the girl by the mother.

It has to be noted that though the mother rebukes and scolds her daughter, it is clear that she also cares for her daughter. The reader perceives the voice of the mother through the ears of the girl, though the girl herself is not heard. The mother's advice reeks of patriarchal values where the girl is considered to be respectable only if she is domestic and homely. The mother believes that only she can save her daughter from stooping to a life of disrespect and promiscuity. She scolds her daughter for the way she walks, the way she plays marbles, and how she relates to other people. The mother's constant emphasis on this theme shows how much she wants her daughter to realize that she is "not a boy" and that she needs to act in a way that will win her respect from the community.

What we can see here is the stereotypical inculcation of the patriarchal values in a preadolescent girl by the mother. Since time immemorial the girl child is catered with ideas of domesticity. Stereotypical gender roles are

carved out into the young minds of both genders. As Simon de Beauvoir has aptly quoted 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman'. Though sex is biological, gender is a construct of the patriarchal society, where the father is the head of the family and all the other members are subordinate to him. It is not just that the house hold chores and managing the house falls on the woman but any substantial and important decision-making is also denied to her. The woman becomes the 'Other' and the man 'Self'.

Here, in Jamaica Kincaid's 'Girl' the mother imparts knowledge to her daughter which oozes of such stereotypical notions of how a girl has to behave so that she is accepted and appreciated in a man's world. The mother asks her not to squat down and play marbles because she is 'not a boy'. Boys and girls become stereotypes where certain qualities are attributed to 'manliness' and certain qualities are attributed to femininity. Bravery, courage, strength are manly qualities shyness, weakness and fragility are associated with femininity. The mother believes that domestic knowledge will lead to productivity and prevent the daughter from becoming the 'slut' her mother thinks she longs to be. The mother advices her against mingling with 'wharf-rat' boys or sing benna at Sunday school. There is a hint of racism too here, in asking the daughter not to speak to 'wharf-rat' boys.

Some of the themes and motives that Kincaid uses here are, themes of domesticity sexuality; and motifs of food, benna, cloth, mother and daughter. The domesticity is very obvious to the leader. The mother has reverence for the power of domesticate which shows in her advice on how to wash cloth, cook food, grow vegetables. Theme of sexuality is openly spoken and also tangentially linked to tasks such as squeezing of bread before buying it and flies following the daughter, etc. The motif of food suggests the legacy of the mother who passes the old family recipes to the younger generation of stereotypical girls. *Doukno* and

pepper pot place the story in Antigua and the Caribbean. Cloth as a motif stands for the importance of respectability. Benna is Antiguan folksong which symbolises sexuality. Antiguans sang benna to secretly spread scandalous rumours and gossips under the British, hence it can be a representation of disobedience and sin. Taboo subject of sexuality is being discussed and in the church at that! The girl's protest against singing benna suggests that she knows benna's seductive power, mystic and forbidden qualities

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9

Stories from the North-East: A Journey into the 'War Zone'

—Manjushree M.

And I still wait, for a warm embrace
All the rivers from my land
Legends, rains weary
Cannot quench my thirst, I need your love
Don't you see,
I am different?
Even I have words,
Languages and, literatures
And stories to tell you
Are you eager to listen, at all?

– Aruni Kashyap, Me

The endeavors and struggles of Aruni Kashyap – young Assamese poet and novelist in English — to redefine himself and the identity of his land becomes evident in one of his subtle poems *Me*. The lines are certainly a concurrent demonstration of his celebration and lamentation about the region he is rooted in. On one hand, he celebrates the cultural and linguistic diversities that make his land a matchless beauty bound with exceptional scenic patches. Nevertheless, he laments the unnoticed and unrepresented identity of the entire North East by mainland India. This is not just the predicament of Aruni Kashyap alone but

also that of many such intellectuals and specifically the writers from the region who have been trying to voice the differences and difficulties of the North Eastern part of India through their vibrant and dynamic body of literature.

Contemporary literatures from the North Eastern States of India that certainly is a product of and response to multiple socio-political, cultural as well as geographical context of this varied region have begun to capture the imagination of the world in the recent years. Particularly since the turn of the century, literature, for majority of the North-East writers has become not only a medium of creative expression but also a powerful mode for revealing the realities of their regions. 'Emerging out of colonial – ethnographic representation and seeking consolidation of ethnic and cultural identities in post colonial times, the writers from North-East India in their works describe themselves and their cultures, express their views and ideas, feelings and emotions thereby signifying their cultural and ethnic particularity' (Baral p. 5). Literature, at the same time, has also become a pulsating site for such writers to register their resistance against the manifold problems of the North-East emanating from issues related to insurgency and counter insurgency, distance from the mainland Indian sates and identity crisis, political strife as well as ethnic conflicts that have disturbed the peace of the region. Despite the discomfort of many writers and thinkers regarding the usage of the umbrella term 'North Eastern India' which they feel cannot capture the heterogeneous cultures and pluralities of all the eight states, literatures from the region has definitely moved on to occupy conspicuous place in Indian Literature.

Being stereotyped as "Literature from Conflict Zone", North Eastern Literature has been depicting poignantly the causes and consequences of various types of problems and conflicts that have been rocking the region especially since independence. Feeling of severe neglect and internal

colonization, political attitudes of the central government towards these states, formation of separatist groups based on ethnicity and violent demands for autonomy and sovereignty have caused much damage to the landscape and mindscape of the people of the region. Added to these problems are the Centre's counter insurgency policies and initiatives such as the deployment of Army over the major portions of North Eastern states since 1972 aimed at curbing separatist movements have further complicated the problems. The cases of Human Rights Violations by the Army have in fact led to more severe conflicts between the insurgency movements and military deployments. 'From the time of independence in 1947, India has dealt with armed ethnic conflicts in its North Eastern region. Ranging from demands of greater autonomy within Indian union to outright secession, the multiple armed ethnic groups have taken a toll in civilian lives in the areas where they operate...' (Goswamy, p 1)

The physical and psychological damages plus cultural displacement and intrusions caused explicitly by insurgency movements and counter insurgency operations have left a deep impact on the psyche of the commonman. 'Exotic, colourful and beautiful the North-East might seem to most outsiders, but in truth, the region is also a hotbed of conflict and violence. Almost all the eight states face the problem of insurgency, with more than fifty insurgent groups operating in these states. Thus, today for the common people in the region, life is an every day existential crisis, caught as they are in the crossfire between the insurgents, the government's counter— insurgency operations and the reluctant vicious circle of insecurity, vulnerability and hopelessness, death and violence in addition to the ever— present problems of corruption, poverty and unemployment' (The Heart of the Matter, p. 9). Such tensions born out of intertwining of political as well as personal spheres have constantly found their better expression in literature—

particularly in short stories from this region that has emerged as significant genre in recording the dilemma and turbulence of both the writers and commoners while grappling with the grave realities of political disturbances.

It is with this background that the present article makes an attempt to study the select short stories of one of the most significant and sensitive creative minds from North-East India—Temsula Ao, as she struggles to negotiate with practical issues surrounding insurgency and its nightmarish experiences on human lives in her home land. This much acclaimed writer from Nagaland is neither interested in providing 'historical facts nor in 'political documentation' of the Nagas. Her interest, however, lies in 'trying to say that in such conflicts, there are no winners, only victims ...for the victims the trauma goes beyond the realm of just the physical maiming and loss of life—their very humanity is assaulted and violated and the onslaught leaves the survivors scarred both in mind and soul'(Ao, p. x) . Simultaneously, the stories from her collection *These Hills Called Home-Stories from a War Zone* also try to provide a beautiful representation of that part of India hitherto marginalized in mainstream literature. Despite the cultural and linguistic multiplicities and variations, what binds her with other writers from the region is her abiding concerns for human lives entangled in the confusions of insurgency and also counter insurgency movements across the states. The narratives discussed here correspondingly depict the deep bondage of the writer with her roots and her passion towards her people. Her stories such as *The Jungle Major* and *The Curfew Man* highlight the way women offer their own resistance within their domestic space to counter insurgency operations of Indian Government and thereby save their male partners whereas *The Last Song* chronicles how issues of insurgency gets seeped into the minds and memories of the ordinary

people whereas the nature of the effects of such political chaos on the youth becomes the crux of *shadows.*

Insurgency thus not only remains a mere backdrop for Temsula but rather becomes memory space where collective memories and experiences get unleashed. *These Hills Called Home* in fact is based on the 'turbulent years of bloodshed and tears that make up the history of the Nagas from the early fifties of the last century, and their demand for independence from the Indian state' (p. x) literally 'probe how the events of that era have restructured or even 'revolutionized' the Naga psyche' (p. x). The most interesting change and challenge was offered by the women who being in domestic space played a pivotal role in saving their men during crisis. *The Jungle Major* is one such story that chronicles the events taking place in the life of Khatila who cleverly saves her husband from the clutches of officials deployed to catch him as a part of counter insurgency measures. The story begins with a brief description of the reactions of the people towards Khatila's marriage to Punaba, 'a mere driver', short, dark, fellow with buck teeth. The announcement of the marriage is quickly followed by wide gossiping among the villagers for Punaba could no where equal Khatila either in physical appearance or in family positions. Though admonished by the villagers as the most 'mis- matched couple' Khatila and Punaba get busy with their lives and they seem to be perfectly happy. However, the quiet and calm life of couple gets disturbed when the land gets 'caught in the new wave of patriotic fervor that swept the imagination of the Naga people and plunged them into a struggle, which many did not even understand'(p. 3-4). Temsula goes on to reveal how the villages would support the underground outfits by supplying them necessary information, arms and ammunitions as well as food and other essential commodities. Khatila and Punaba's village becomes a

metaphor, through which Temsula overtly and objectively describes the sudden happenings in her state,

> 'The subject of independence became public talk: young people spoke of the exploits of their peers in encounters with government forces and were eager to join the new band of 'patriotic' warriors to liberate their homeland from foreign rule. Some actually disappeared from the village and their names henceforth were spoken only in whispers. Skirmishes were taking place close to the village and the atmosphere within the village seemed became one of fear and mutual suspicion...It seemed that a pall had descended upon the entire land.'(p. 3)

Temsula's remarks are not confined to her people alone who no doubt had started their struggles with romantic nationalism that 'somehow got rewritten into one of disappointment and disillusionment because it became the very thing it sought to overcome' (p. x). She is also serious in evaluating the humiliation and horror meted out to innocent people in the name of security operations to hunt leaders who had become underground with the entire villages being punished, houses being ransacked, women being molested and people thrown to 'virtual imprisonment fenced in bamboo stockades'.

Temsula clearly demonstrates the transformation of Khatila's remote village into 'one of the main conduits for supplies and information' to the rebels. News about Punaba having joined the underground army and the stories about the atrocities of the army transform Khatila's simple village into strong sympathizer of the underground forces. Khatila is depicted as a shrewd woman with presence of mind who can balance both the queries the villagers as well as that of the officers about her husband. Her common sense and courage gets highlighted splendidly in the manner she saves her husband and parcels him safely out of the house. As soon as the information about Punaba's visit to his wife after a gap of five months reaches the government, the security forces suddenly surround the house. Khatila, however, decides to save her husband, herself and the

entire village from the approaching soldiers. She knows for sure that the house has no hiding place and also Punaba will not surrender. Even before Punaba could realize what is happening she forces him to dress himself in old clothes, smear him with ash and starts hurling abuses and shouting at her husband to bring water from the well. Simultaneously she empties all the water containers. She cleverly manages to confuse the young Captain and his troops with her shouting and behavior, while Punaba, now in ragged clothes looking typically like a servant with a water carrier on his head is sent out of the house in the pretext of getting water from the nearby well. 'The young and inexperienced Army officer did not realize that the beautiful but simple village woman had thus foiled a meticulously planned 'operation' of the mighty Indian Army and that a prized quarry had simply walked away to freedom.'(p. 7)

Temsula suggests how Punaba's escapade, made possible by his wife becomes a part of legend. Punaba based on Khatila's suggestion, later surrenders and returns to normal life with his wife during the process of general cease fire while their giving clean chit to the Army story gets heroic status and gets permanently registered in the memory space.

The bleak situation in her land gets better edge in Temsula's one more story *The Curfew Man* wherein she discusses in detail the effects of unwelcomed curfew imposition and Army infiltration more clearly on human lives especially on the innocent villagers and the small town inhabitants caught between 'two warring armies; the one overground labeling the other as rebels fighting against the state and the other, operating from their underground hide- outs and calling the Indian Army illegal occupants of sovereign Naga territories'(p. 34). Of all the worst restrictions, the night curfew was the most hated one for it halted all the social activities. Even people who

had emergency situations like visiting a doctor used to be humiliated. Temsula assembles the image thus:

> "Often these helpless people were sent back with abuses and threats completely disregarding the urgent need of the poor patients. There were several incidents where civilians were shot dead by the patrol parties after curfew and their deaths reported as those of underground rebels killed in 'encounters' with the Army" (p. 34).

However these nights were ideal for the so called informers 'employed by civil authorities and the security forces who were paid to gather information about those whose sons or relatives had joined the underground' (p. 35).These informers kept a watch even on those who sympathized with the movement including government officials, doctors and even house wives who supplied necessary items to the underground organizations. Temsula suggests how government came up with the cunning plan for recruiting these informers who lived very much amidst their own people but secretly bartered the information to the higher authorities. These informers were usually the bad elements in the villages and towns who were promised either with handsome money or with threats to open up the old criminal cases against them if they refused to co-operate. Such informers were thus working in grey area between the government and the so – called 'freedom fighters' (p. 35). With these details, Temsula begins to locate the identity and conflicts of one such informer Satemba operating in the grey area and his wife Jemtila. An excellent football player and constable in the Assam Police Satemba decides to take up early retirement due to severe injury in his knee while playing football. He eventually settles down in a small village in Nagaland but soon begins to feel out of place. However, his wife Jemtila, through her hard work manages to get the job as a maid at new Subdivisional Officer's house. It is at this juncture that Satemba falls prey to the eyes of the Officer who cunningly employs him as his informer.

With Satemba's new job come new responsibilities and risks. Jemtila soon becomes suspicious of the nature of his job which forces him to stay out during night and she begins to grill her husband only to discover the kind of 'hanky panky' job that her husband has been employed. All her efforts to persuade him with threats and warnings fail and Satemba makes it clear to her that they have to stick to their jobs for livelihood while Jemtila anxiously keeps 'lone vigil in the darkness of their small hut and worried until he appeared at the door' (p. 39). Satemba soon starts contemplating the moral implications of his activities and 'soul searching' especially after realizing that his information has resulted in the killing of innocent villager. Temsula is terse in her depiction of Satemba's moral dilemmas as he decides to quit his job after completing his last assignment regarding the delivery of vital information about the planned meeting of the underground leaders in the following weekend. When he is out in the curfew night to deliver his last information, he is rounded off by an enigmatic stranger who warns Satemba to stop his business of carrying the tales. Satemba is too shocked with this sudden encounter and returns home with his bleeding knee. Jemtila is mellowed enough to understand the mental and physical exhaustion of her husband and she decides to use the situation to their advantage— to win freedom:

> "If the first bad knee had secured him his pension from Assam Police, the second injury truly secured his freedom from a sinister bondage' (p. 42)

She rushes to the officer and hurriedly tells him that her husband had a fall previous night and he is unable to walk for the rest of his life. Her animated descriptions and seeming unconcern towards her husband's injury leave the Officer perplexed who even broods over the attitude and behavior of certain classes of people. He immediately dismisses Satemba from services and orders Jemtila to resume her duty as a maid. Temsula suggests that new

curfew man would be hired by evening while Satemba – an ex curfew man with two 'smashed knee caps' would soon pass onto the pages of history.

Khatila and Jemtila thus become the victors who refuse to be victimized by the political turmoil. The credit of having saved the lives of their partners amidst severe limitations and adverse situation indeed goes to them. Their commonsense and calmness helps them to rise above the deadly circumstances and make sense of the situations around them.

Not all the women who figure in *These Hills Called Homes* are as lucky as Jemtila or Khatila as it becomes clear in case of Apenyo and her mother Libeni in *The Last Song*. Libeni is a single mother who has struggled hard to bring up her beautiful and talented daughter Apenyo who is blessed with an exceptional voice and is the lead singer in the Church Choir. Their quiet life is shattered when the government decides to 'teach' a good lesson to the Naga people who supported the underground government of the rebels in the demand for independence. Even Apenyo's village falls prey to the 'sinister plan' and on that particular day of the inauguration of the new Church, the Army stoops on the village as per their secret mission. Apenyo who was about to begin her singing as part of the festivities, bursts into her solo song before anything could happen. She is soon joined by other members of the Choir. The 'incenced' soldiers consider it 'an act of open defiance' against which 'proper retaliation had to be made' (p. 27). They brutally begin to thrash the crowd and arrest the Pastor. Though the villagers and other Choir members run away, Apenyo, as if being guided by some unseen presence, sticks to her singing but only to be pulled towards the old Church building by the Army leader. In futile, Libeni rushes to rescue her daughter from being raped and watched over by other soldiers who too seemed to be eagerly waiting for their turn. Libeni too is assaulted

severely, becomes unconscious and gang raped which eventually results in her death. The efforts of some of the villagers to lift the mother and daughter's limp bodies further irk the Captain who immediately orders for firing. The helpless villagers drop the bodies and run away and with that even Apenyo who was holding her last breath is also killed. The Captain realizes that it 'would be waste of time and bullets to kill all the witnesses inside the Church' (p. 29) and orders his troops to set it on fire. The whole attack leaves many innocent villagers being killed and injured, many more missing and arrested in the name of investigation. Temsula is quite obvious in her description of the psychological scar such ghastly incident leaves on the people who are the collective victims of Army atrocities under counter insurgency measures,

> "Among the rain drenched ashes of the old Church they [villagers] found masses of human bones washed clean by the night's rain.... The mother and daughter lay together in that pile."(p. 30)

Libeni and particularly Apenyo whose 'last song died with her last breath' (p. 31) thus become a part of harsh memory that would haunt the villagers for many generations. Even though the whole incident makes the Captain end up in mental asylum, the damages he had inflicted upon the psyche of the villagers can never be erased. Temsula sketches the young girl Apenyo as a powerful character who could be heard humming with 'her unseeing eyes fixed' on the Captain's face even when she is getting raped. She uses her song as a weapon to register her protest and challenge the intrusion of the Army both into her body and the soul of her village. Apenyo, thus become a symbol of resistance and remembrance, seeps into the memories of the Nagas. The old generation duly think that it is their duty to keep Apenyo alive in their memories and therefore next generation should know 'the story of that black Sunday when a young and beautiful

singer sang last song even as one more Naga village began weeping for her ravaged and ruined children" (p. 33).

Temsula's stories are of wide range and are not simply limited to sketch the lives of women caught in deep dangers. With equal anxiety she also documents the effects of such internal disturbances on the youth who had joined the freedom movement of their states with elevated idealism and assumptions only to be disillusioned with it soon. This gets better illustrated in her yet another story *Shadows* that presents the life and death of a young boy Imli who joins the underground rebels despite his father's severe objections. Soon he is exposed to the dangers of jungle life:

> "Whatever, romantic idealism had first made him decide upon a life in the underground army had soon evaporated and been replaced by a new awareness of the ground reality (p. 76)

However, he is still fresh and inexperienced and is unaware that his zeal to work as a rebel and prove his identity would cost his life. His Commander Hoito becomes suspicious of Imli and sends him away in the forest in the pretext of a secret mission. On the way, as pre planned Imli is attacked by Hoito's men who abandon him to die a slow painful and lonely death in the shadows of the forest. With this, the 'inexperienced college boy who had joined the freedom fighters against all odds found his final resting place in an unmarked grave in the shadows of a deep forest in an alien land' (p. 80).The sight of Imli's dead body leaves a deep impact on his friend Roko's mind as he tries to come to grips with the real circumstances that might have caused Imli's death. Though Roko decides not to utter this secret the burden weighs too much for him. He has no doubt seen many violent deaths in his own life as an insurgent but this particular boy Imli haunts him through out his life for whom he continues to shed secret tears while the 'gory details of his [Imli's] horrifying death gradually became the stuff of underground legend which

led to a great deal of mutual distrust among the freedom fighters and many factional clashes' (p. 85). Much after his retirement from the underground activities Roko takes up the job of advising the youth from his village not to 'think of joining any army because, ...when you have a gun in your hand, you cease to think like a normal human being (p. 85)As far as Hoito's plight, he goes abruptly missing and years later he is discovered again in the shadows of the same jungle. Driven crazy, one could see him shouting Imli's name in the dark jungles only to be met with similar fate of dying a slow painful death and with that the circle of sin and punishment gets completed. Temsula is grave in her portrayal of the physical and psychological damages, disappointments and disillusionments that such movements and underground activities leave on the lives of youth who join the band with high idealism that sooner or later gets perished.

Temsula thus makes a balanced attempt in questioning the purpose and intentions of both insurgency and counter insurgency movements and how such acts can completely change the history, memory and cultural lives of generations of innocent people and their lands. She does not use her literary site either to favor or admonish the policies of the rebels and the government but rather makes an authentic effort to construct the lives shattered apart and give voice to the emotions of her people from her land. She seems to echo Aruni Kashyap in sharing his common concern for peace and harmony in the entire North-East,

> "But for peace and a natural son rise,
> Yearns for redness from the sun floating between clouds,
> Not in a green flag."(Aruni Kashyap, *Where the Sun Rises)*

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Victimhood to Agency: A Study in "*A Leaf in the Storm*"

—*Dr. Asha N. Rabb*

The primary a focus of this paper being the narrative of women by woman, it deals with the short story "*A Leaf in the Storm*" written by Lalithambika Antharjanam, (1909–87) a woman writer from the Indian subcontinent. Being a Partition narrative it is a sensitive story of resistance to retaliation and the survival of life. The story primarily concerns itself with Jyotirmoyi Devpal a young survivor and her transformation from ceasing to "dwell in grief" to realising the value of a new birth and becoming kind. The present article tries to bring out how the protagonist strongly feels to retaliate but what makes her forget her anger, desperation leading her to discover her enormous compassion for a new life and the ways of living which restore her to sanity. From a victim she transforms into an agent. The paper highlights the courage and determination of the protagonist to be human in spite of the unnatural conditions of her life.

Key words: Partition, rape, suffering, abort, torture, trauma, retaliation, compassion

"When our lives get too difficult to handle, we consciously work ourselves into a rage or go down into depression"

Rosemary Tong (194).

Alloy and Abramson in their *Depressive Realism: Four Theoretical Perspectives* (1988) argue that the depressed individuals tend to get more realistic inferences than do non-depressed individuals. The depressed persons are considered to have negative ideas that would result in negative thoughts, behaviour and dysfunctional world beliefs. But this depressive realism argues that this negativity may reflect a more accurate appraisal of the world. As Rosemary Tong exclaims that women in the worst conditions of their life do work themselves into rage but they do recover from it and reveal their potential towards proactivity forgetting their reactivity. There is every possibility of turning women's sorrow into rage. With this background the present article deals with a short story called "A Leaf in the Storm" written originally in Malayalam. The stories as these are about people who refuse to give into rage and struggle to discover ways of living which would restore them to a balanced way of life. In India a historical event of great magnitude like Partition has been inspiring the writers, artists and critics to dwell on it and to create great works in various languages. Partition "was the single most traumatic event which witnessed insanity that surpassed the genocide under the Nazis" (Rathor 30). A conspicuous body of literature has been produced to bring home the trauma of Partition and its aftermath in the country.

The sexual violence and the abuse of women have been the worst parts of the Partition. Violence against women has been the significant and inevitable feature of Partition. The significant tendency of it has been to make women feel ashamed of and disgusted with their bodies and sexuality. The main intention of such violence was to frighten the conquered people. Women are normally considered a commodity to use and abuse, and a space to be occupied. Under such circumstances as Andrew J. Major observes, "revenge can become a powerful motive (or

excuse) for abuse of women" (Major 59) and as Rosemary Tong feels *"When our lives get too difficult to handle, we consciously work ourselves into a rage or go down into depression"* (Tong 194).

The present paper deals with a story "A Leaf in the Storm" by Lalithambika Antharjanam. The story offers the psychology of the protagonist caught in the midst of the terrible events reflecting her pathos and trauma in various ways. The story through its pages furnishes the clue to know how people especially women of all ages survived the holocaust, how they coped with the tragedy befell on them and more importantly how they strived to rebuilt their lives through their dislocation and their existence in the strange places "bearing their baggage of bitterness and pain" (Gnanamony 122).

Plenty of Partition literature was produced and the narratives by women writers received considerable attention. Their act of narration of violence against women is an empowering act as it bestows a voice to the victimised "muted group" (Kramarae 5) by instilling awareness and compelling them to consider the act of their violation and punish its perpetrators. The act of narration about such violence on both body and mind of women becomes an apocalyptic moment. Mark Ledbetter says that the writing of such literature is an effort to discover and to make heard silenced voices; an ethic of reading is to hear those voices. Violence according to Frantz Fanon is a catalyst of change. He discusses the role of violence in social change in his book *The Wretched of the Earth.*

One such writer Lalithambika Antharjanam through her narration brings forth the violated female body to the front and the trauma suffered by a young girl during Partition. Her narration traces the gradual transition from victimhood to agency and rehabilitation; the immediate reactions of emotional outbursts into the subjective

realisation that dawns upon later with the passage of time and change of space.

Women have always been the worst sufferers during any crises-ridden times. The losses of women during such times will be in terms of dislocation, material damage and death which amount to their physical and mental suffering; at the most material and financial losses which can be repaired and retrieved with the passage of time. But the loss of women is irreparable. Their loss could not be regained as it involves their loss of dignity, self-respect and individual esteem which are aligned with their sexual and moral purity. Under such circumstances women go through a moment of avenging their loss. Like men's loss women's losses were not temporary because their rape has been the most heinous and serious crime reflecting the gender inequality in the world. It is one of the most serious offences as it involves their bodies and blemishes the future of the victim. Because the body for women is the site of their selfhood hence the damage done to it by sexual violence is completely irreversible. The self-righteous women have been defiled physically and morally. Such women had to bear their burden till their last breath as their suffering and exploitation is prolonged, continued and permanent one. "The uniqueness of this crime lies probably in the fact that this crime not only marks the body in the present: it continues to haunt the spirit of the victim in the future and may be until the death of the victim" (Sharma 5). The literature dealing with Partition days re-present such physical abuse, psychological shock and the mental torture that women underwent. Among such stories the most prominent one is "A Leaf in the Storm" by Lalithambika Antharjanam. Alok Bhalla categorises such stories as "Exile" by Jamila Hashmi, and "Lajwanti" by Rajinder Singh Bedi as "the stories of lamentation and consolation . . . primarily concerned with the survivors of those genocidal days" (Bhalla xxxviii). It is not merely the

grief stricken past which haunts them but the present is equally terrifying and painful. Alok Bhalla reads these stories as, "troubled attempts to find out if, after having suffered so much, it is possible for the survivors to cease to "dwell in grief" and learn to live in kinder days:... if they can accept the fact of having been permanently 'marked' by violence and yet resist the temptation to retaliate: if they can mourn for those who were killed and still urge forgiveness (Bhalla xxiv, xxxviii). But the story by Lalithambika is about a young woman though plunges into rage, struggles to discover the ways of living which restores her to stability. In Jamila Hashmi's story "Exile" Sita the protagonist refuses to re-live and recount those moments of her life that are too tortuous, and by deciding to nurture her daughter, to use Sophocles' phrase "not to breed sorrow from sorrow". Vishnu Prabhakar speaks of a protagonist in his story who learns to live a reasonably contented life though she loses her child as she flees from Pakistan. But when on the way she comes across a baby who has been left behind in a train she decides to bring him up as her own. It is important to consider that her encounter with evil does not deter her to take the recourse to humane actions in order "to prevent the world from sliding further into ruin" (Bhalla xli).

The story under study has young victimised woman as its protagonist and it attempts to unearth the complexity of the victim-protagonist who rises from her ashes heroically and realises her innate humane nature. Lalithambika noticed such women who were quite humane and exhibited courage and determination in all odd circumstances. Lalithambika Antharjanam (1909–87) was a famous Indian social reformer and writer who became famous through her literary works in Malayalam language. The sight of degradation of women around her instigated her to bring their reality into broad daylight through her writings. The different faces of woman as daughter, sister, wife and

mother were concentrated upon in a number of her stories. "Kodumkattilpetta Orila" is one such story which revolves around a defiled woman in a relief camp where she was brought orphaned by the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1948. It is translated into English as "A Leaf Caught in Storm". It is considered a master short story. "Lalithambika's touching tales of women's woes, told with compassion and conviction, will definitely stand the test of time as a poignant record reflecting the sobs and sighs of a bygone period" (Memoir 32).

"Antharjanam" means "she who spends her life inside". The two parts of her name - "Lalitha" and "Ambika" mean literally the Red One and little mother and also the name of a goddess. As Jancy James in *Indian Literature* observes, she "was Kerala's greatest literary spokeswoman of maltreated womanhood" (quoted in Memoir 32). She is the "Grand Dame of Malayalam letters, who passed away in 1987 at the age of seventy eight" (Memoir 32). Antharjanam began by writing poems but the short story was her favourite genre. It suited her best to excellently "maintain an objective correlative within the text" (Memoir 32). She realised the infinite scope and innate possibilities of short-story. According to her, "there is no other literary form so consummate as to convey emotions and sentiments with strength and sensitivity than the short-story, especially when the writer has a specific aim to achieve" (Memoir 32). The main aim of Lalithambika was to expose the agonising ordeal of Namboodiri women who were condemned to lead a cloistered life coupled with tormenting taboos. She is the first Woman of Malayalam Letters and the single voice from the elite Namboodiri community of Kerala. She played an important role in the social transformation of the Namboodiri community and of Kerala society in general.

In the four decades between 1940 and 1980, she published several short story collections. At the age of

sixty-seven Antharjanam published her first and only novel, *Agnisakshi* (1976) which was awarded with the *Sahitya Akademy*. In the year 1997 this very novel was adapted into a cinema with the same title. Her published works include two books for children, nine volumes of short stories and six collections of poems. Her son N. Mohanan was also a noted author and a winner of Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award.

Lalithambika Antharjanam's story, "A Leaf in the Storm" narrates the experience of some abducted and sexually abused women. The story captures the fate of such an "unattached" young girl called Jyotirmoyi Devpal who has been the unfortunate victim of multiple rapes. She had actively participated in the Nationalist movement. She was brought up in perfect happiness. She had college education and was influenced by nationalist fervour. Jyotirmoyi Devpal was a Sikh woman from a rich family. She was a highly educated intelligent girl and was a pet of her parents. She was a woman who refused to veil her face and spurned the proposal from a Zamindar. She was quite independent. But now she was in a pathetic condition. The story takes place in a refugee camp in Western Punjab. She dutifully fought to uphold her ideals but suffered brutality. She had dedicated herself to the upliftment of women but unfortunately she herself is reduced to a state of utter helplessness. Along with fourteen other women she is concealed in a bullockcart with bundles of hay by her generous Muslim friends called Qasim and his daughter Ayesha. But those fifteen women were discovered which causes "loud, thunderous laughter. Wild shouts" (169). Alok Bhalla feels that it is "typical of what women have to suffer during the Partition . . . as during all processes of 'ethnic cleansing', the bodies of women have become contested sites for men of the warring communities to prove that they have the proper claim to be called god's own people and, the right to possess or to kill the women whom they find in their kingdom" (Bhalla xii).

Fifty bonded women were handed over for fifty reclaimed "women." The exchange took place on the border. They were shuttle cocked "from one prison to another" (137). The protagonist did not cry like the other women. But her eyes reflected hate and cynicism. She despised the whole world. She was good-looking and noble and from a well-to-do family and was a rape victim. She refused to eat or drink. She was tortured by her own idealism, her ardent, long-cultivated desire for freedom as she realised the physical pain of her pregnancy. The camp doctor was coaxing her to drink milk. She was shouting at the doctor, "Look at me! I am damned too . . . You want me to live on still, and sow the seed of damnation?" (139). She was conceived in consequence of inhuman rape. Her belly was swollen; only a few people in the camp knew her secret that she was pregnant and unmarried, and had been "reclaimed" by the camp. She had to bear her pain and her humiliation all by herself. There were many like her in the camp. She was watching them. Some of them were weeping aloud. When a volunteer brought some bread for her, she exploded, "Damn your crumbs of bread; I want a gun. Or a dagger. Wouldn't mind a little poison either. It's that I want . . . first and last . . ." (137). In that unmanageable crowd of refugees, Jyoti was just a speck, just a leaf in the storm. She was certainly the most emaciated of the women reclaimed from that obscure village in Western Punjab and of course the most outraged of them all too. What was indeed surprising is that she was alive. Some of them recounted their baneful lives—an old woman who lost all her nine children all killed. Her girls were abducted. Her house was gutted. And there she stood, in the courtyard, supporting herself on a stick, watching her house burn down to ashes. Yet she lives on . . . She eats, sleeps, and talks. It is nothing but the hope and passion for life.

The protagonist on the other hand reflected her hate and cynicism of one who despised the whole world. She

clenched her fist, aimed it at her belly to put an end to the life within. The occupants of the camp have begun to notice this small woman, good looking and noble, and perhaps born into a well-to-do family. She observed everything about her. The life inside her, "conceived in . . . inhuman rape and ignorance," tortures her as she watches births and deaths in the camp and grows increasingly bitter. The doctor coaxes her to drink milk. Her outrageous reply was, "Look at me! I am damned too. You want me to live on still, and sow the seed of damnation? . . . Tell me are you able to destroy something which must be destroyed . . . ? Now this life bred of damnation — conceived in consequence of inhuman rape and ignorance — tell me doctor, can you destroy this, save another life ... ? Can you do that?" . . . He was stricken with a kind of moral cowardice. Breaking an egg and wringing another's neck or taking away lives, in different ways in that ocean of mass movement she was but a wave; and a leaf in the storm. She witnessed many births in the camp. The wretched women like her in the camp contemplated, "How did this happen? Who was at fault? They cursed all the wellknown leaders. They gnashed their teeth in vengeful rage. Some of them blamed even the "toothless grandsire" of Indian politics — that kindly soul! The woman, who is also the narrator of the story, is justifiably horrified when she realises in the refugee camp that she is pregnant. At firsts she wants to abort the child (as many women in such camps were advised to do by the social workers), both to avoid social stigma and to seek revenge. What shook within her body was a challenge to every cell of her being. It symbolised everything womanhood and humanity found despicable in nature. She was awakened to the biological reality of the baby within her. And it was sure that it would grow within her, drawing on her life-blood! It moved and drew breath from her own life-breath. One day, it will emerge — this "cosmic shape" — biding no one's time, seeking no one's permission. Whatever, the situation 'Comeout it

must, willy-nilly'. She in several ways tried her best to get rid of that hateful being within her body. Pressing her big belly hard against the floor and also against the trunk of a tree, she bore her pain. She had witnessed lifeless bodies of new born babies being dragged by the scavengers and she thought the same would repeat in her case. But when her child was born, she didn't allow the scavenger to drag it away. Though this refugee was the most emaciated and the most outraged of all the reclaimed women from Western Punjab, she felt at last like a flash that "One must carry one's cross oneself" (145). The little life, she said to herself "is seeking refuge, stirring its little feet" and feeling the mass of flesh on her belly . . . Oh how warm it is! Did my body give it so much warmth? I hope its looks are like mine . . . Perhaps I should look at it, its small eyes, once . . . just once!" Jyoti's mind at last laid her claim over the child. It was as though the child by its birth aroused her maternal instincts and the mother in her awakened. Her universe becomes positive and the "dimmed stars beam from the heavens"! The triumph of motherhood of having acquired something, of relating and providing for another life defines Jyoti's life with fresh affirmations. The complex mess of troubled living gets pacified with the strength of her maternal instincts which arose spontaneously within her. Not only had the new life been given refuge by the mother but, the woman herself acquired a fresh life and sustenance from her pregnancy which she earlier hated and had wished to abort. It is not that the violence and sexual assault on her is thus legitimised, but the denigrated woman moves and enters into the world of positive motherhood rather than getting stuck in the mesh of victimhood. She can prepare herself to defy all social norms to safeguard her child and keep the stars shining in the heavens! In such cases motherhood in itself becomes the source of strength for the woman — the strength and experience not coming to her externally but from within, from her own biological existence. When she gave birth to the child she herself was

thrust into a profound yet spontaneous confrontation with the value of life. Surprisingly, almost despite herself, she chooses life, taking the child in her arms, letting her life-blood flow "like fresh milk."

But the moment the child is born, she is filled with enormous compassion for the life she is carrying and the responsibility she has to sustain it. In a moment of visionary understanding, she decides to nurture and nourish it and to ensure the continuity of the life on this earth. The story excites an awe-inspiring sense of compassion for those who are more helpless and a refusal to inflict further pains. Instead of thinking endlessly about days under the curse of evil, she realizes her sense of self which survivors of horror develop and that the longer she lives in the world, the more profoundly is the sense of its immortality aroused in her and the more natural it is for her to love the child. The writer, Lalithambika Antharjanam, has thus given voice to the muteness of women and identified the quiet process of expelling the rapists from the woman's mind.

One becomes conscious of the fact that while trying to return to normalcy and sane life paradoxically the responsibility falls on women who have to shoulder the responsibility to "prevent the world from sliding further into ruin" a role which bestows a kind of agency to them. But in such situations, they remain completely as an 'object', the 'other' and the 'different'. In these Partition stories one finds many choices being offered to women but unfortunately they get confused as to what to choose from among equally painful alternatives. Despite it, it can be concluded that Lalithambika through her story asserts that such self-understanding and self-realisation alone will empower and enable women to articulate the conditions which would make a good society and discover the political means necessary to achieve in the present circumstances. She tells the stories of the degrading, shameful and brutal acts in order to repudiate hatred and to turn the victim

away from seeking revenge and to win her trust once again in the ordinary and daily kindliness which makes up lives by healing wounds and by finding consolation in memories. Like all other conscientious writers, she wishes to present a world in which people can cultivate their reason, rationality and moral goodness. Like all other good writers, she also knew how difficult that endeavour really is and how often people fall into evil. And it is against such a fall that Lalithambika Antharjanam cautions everyone.

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11

Portrayal of Partition and Social Milieu in the Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto

—Dr. Bhujendra Singh Rathod L.R

According to Khuswant Singh Indian literature can broadly be classified in Pre-Partition and Post-Partition categories. All scholars would more or less agree to 1947 being the defining point in the history not only of India and Pakistan, but also of narratives speaking of nation and national identity. However, it does not seem proper to reduce all of Indian literature under the two broad categories, and one only does so at the risk of deeming all third world literature is necessarily national allegories rhetoric fit. Another concern that shall be quickly pointed out is the slipperiness of the categories, the texts may exist in contact zones of Pre-Partition, Partition and Post-Partition; the Partition narratives contrast Post-Partition realities with a more tolerant, pluralistic, multicultural society of bygone days. The partition narratives thus move back and forth in Pre-Partition Indian society. In and out, we would be considered with manipulation and rewriting of history on both the sides of the border. As Meenakshi Mukherjee has aptly argued elsewhere narratives and nation share an intricate bond, both formulate and consolidate each other. In case of Pakistan, the narratives

that were to form its national identity emanate from, and after, the concrete reality of partition unlike India, in whose context national narratives existed before the Partition too. The present paper attempts at analysing some of the violent and nonviolent 'Partition narratives' of Sadat Hasan Manto to highlight the resistance offered to the idea of Nationalism. These texts do not represent the pillage, bloodshed, genocide and massacres in the wake of Partition rather act as a pungent satire on the divisive politics of Jinnha-Nehru, which led to the Partition. Manto in his writings seem deliberately to stand aloof of the complicated question of nation and national identity; it can't be examined without considering the problematic of his geographical location: though promise of good life Post-Partition pushed him to Lahore (Pakistan) but he felt a growing despair with the conditions in Pakistan. For Manto it was difficult to strike peace with the situation around, the intricate and torn times are reflected in many of his stories but he does not say much about the usual violence that expressed such as Toba Tek Singh, Titwal Ka Kutta and other stories. Stephen Alter in one of his essay, "Madness and Partition: The Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto" says: No writer has been able to convey the violent ambiguities of communal conflict with as much force and conviction as Saadat Hasan Manto. Many of his short stories focus on the sense of despair and dislocation caused by the Partition of Pakistan and India in 1947. Manto vividly recreates the anger and horrors of this period and the trauma of refugees uprooted and victimized by the demarcation of uninformed borders. As the characters in Manto's stories confront the ruthless inhumanity of Hindu-Muslim violence murder, rape and mutilation—their only conceivable response is madness. (Alter 91).

Manto wrote penetrative short stories about India's tragic Partition in 1947, an event defined by mass murder, rape, abduction, arson and forced migration. Though Manto

was born in Muslim community, his stories are distinctly unbiased indicting individuals from all of South Asia's political groups and religious communities, and also British imperialists, whose hasty flight from the subcontinent had caused devastating consequences. Some of these stories, such as the distinguished "Toba Tek Singh", uses satire to convey the political absurdity of Partition, which turned friends and neighbors into enemies overnight, whereas, stories such as "Cold Meat" tackles the brutality head-on. In the latter tale, which prompted the postcolonial Pakistani government to impeach Manto for obscenity, a Sikh man returns home after several days of looting and murdering. The sight of his voluptuous wife arises him, and he tries to make love to her. But he can't get an erection. His sexually perturbed wife grows doubt that has been unethical and ruthlessly stabs him. While the man bleeds to death, he disclosed that he raped a girl during the turmoil, but his confession doesn't end there: it transpires that this beautiful girl was actually a corpse and that the man unconsciously committed an act of necrophilia.

Manto closely looked into the harsh realities of Partition and pour as it is in his short stories. His characters seems to be fabricated but they are real sufferers of Partition victims. The protagonist of the short story "Smell" laments being barred from British—only brothels because of his skin colour, and in "Janaki", the narrator deplores the dearth of penicillin in India compared to its abundance in England and America. He tells the tale of a straitlaced middle-class Muslim who reviles prostitution but then impregnates a prostitute and contemplates murdering their child. He depicts a Marxist feminist succumbing to her own lascivious desires even though she has recently uttered a moralistic attack against sex workers.

These tales were written over the course of more than a decade, both before and after Partition, and are collected here, newly translated, in a single volume for

the first time. Not all of them are perfectly crafted. Manto rarely edited his work and his writing sometimes suffers for it. But these stories contain memorable characters and plots, and they unveil difficult social and psychological truths about life in the modern world. Manto casts a focus on Bombay's darker corners, neighborhoods "dotted with garbage heaps that served as an open toilet". His Bombay is highly cosmopolitan, inhabited by individuals who revere Marlene Dietrich's Hollywood beauty as well as the great Urdu poet Ghalib. Some are boozehound writers trying to make their way in the city's nascent film industry, and a fictionalized version of Manto himself makes several cameo appearances. In such first-person narratives, the author lapses into playful, self-referential musings on the art of storytelling.

Most of the characters here are in some way connected to prostitution, a profession that proliferated in the lawless, ramshackle slums around Bombay's textile factories at the time. The eponymous protagonist of "Khushiya", for example, is a pimp who spends his evenings chewing paan near an auto supply shop. One night, he is perturbed after an interaction with Kanta, one of his prostitutes. When he went to check on Kanta earlier in the day, she answered the door naked and blithely invited him in for tea ("What's the big deal? It's just my Khushiya"). Mulling it over, Khushiya is unnerved by this brazen display, not least because she felt she could make it without eliciting a reaction from him. "She should have been a little ashamed!" he thinks. "She should have blushed a little!" He comes to the conclusion that "his masculine dignity had been affronted", and rushes away from his street corner to put Kanta in her place.

Like "Khushiya", the atmospheric story "Smell" explores the impact of lust and longing on a person's psyche. The protagonist here, the upper-class Randhir, can't get over a passionate tryst he once had with a worker from a nearby rope factory. He remains beguiled by the scent

of this woman's body, which was "like the pleasing aroma that dirt gives off after you sprinkle it with water" and "as real and old as the story of men and women itself". Such descriptions have prompted some critics to label Manto an exoticizer of poverty and women, or a misogynist, and a few of his stories certainly contain simplistic or stereotypical descriptions of women. His female characters nag, or play the coquette, and they are often dependent on men for their redemption. But Manto is just as mocking of men. Though he undoubtedly internalized some of the prejudices of his era, his work seeks to expose society's rigid gender and class boundaries, and his female characters are often empowered and transgressive. Some of his women drink and smoke pot while others vocalize their sexual needs. In "Mozelle", a sexually voracious Jewish woman is a vamp. But she is also courageous, and it is her rejection of traditional values that enables her to protect a conservative Sikh couple from deadly communal violence. Manto's forward-looking views on gender are evident in this book's appendix, which contains some of his polemical non-fiction essays. In one of these, he objects to the fact that "men control society and take advantage of their power". A woman, on the other hand, "no longer remains a woman if she succumbs even once to a youthful desire or some other impulse . . . . She's viewed with contempt and hatred, and doors close for her that would remain open for men".

Saugandhi from "The Insult" is one of this collection's most fully realized female characters. She is a prostitute who lives in a room with a parrot and a dog and sleeps with mid-level Indian officials employed by the colonial government. She is friendly and generous, using her earnings to aid a recently widowed neighbor. Her favorite customer is Macho, a police constable whose dreamy ideas brighten up her days. But Macho is a fraud. He extracts money from Saugandhi instead of paying for her services. One night, Saugandhi gets dolled up to meet a rich client

who sizes her up and rejects her: "She felt as though someone was pressing his thumb against her ribs, as you press your thumb into a sheep or goat to see if there is any meat beneath the hair". Saugandhi's distress pushes her to end things with Macho, a seemingly empowering action, but at the end of the story, she remains isolated and trapped. There can be no easy redemption for this poverty-stricken character in such a stratified and oppressive world.

For writers who wrote around the time it became almost an inward compulsion to write about the Partition of the country. For most of them the memory of what they had suffered or witnessed was too recent to allow for objectivity in their writings about it. There was an obsessive preoccupation with violence as they had been sufferers, eye-witnesses and tragic participants in the horrendous events. The horrors suffered and witnessed had become a part of their experiential world. They were too near and too much involved in the holocaust. The stories that were written immediately after the Partition, therefore, tend to recreate the horror in all its details without many attempts at objectivity or an imaginative rendering of the events being described. These stories neither offer any historical explanation nor see any political necessity for the suffering. They are marked by a sense of rage and helplessness and also a sense of incomprehensibility of it all due to its utter meaninglessness. Writers like Rajinder Singh Bedi, Krishan Chander, Bhishm Sahni, Chaman Nahal, Intizar Husain, Bapsi Sidhwa, Ibne Insha, Kamleshwar, Umm-e-Ummara, Kulwant Singh Virk, Sant Singh Sikhon, Khushwant Singh, Ibrahim Jalees, S.K. Vatsayan and many more; all gave expression to their tormented souls through the medium of fiction. History thus entered the realm of Fiction but a rendering of the same event brought into focus the human face of the tragedy. What were merely some figures and statistics in the historical chronicles of the time now assumed human identities through the works of these

creative writers. Instead of just numbers — so many dead, so many wounded, so many raped, so many homeless— these fictional historical narratives tried to show the actual suffering that lay behind each face, each number. For a historian the holocaust of 1947 can perhaps be covered in two volumes of objective recording. For the fiction writer, however, the sad event threw up unlimited possibilities of delineation and treatment as there were innumerable faces of grief and an equally limitless number of questions that erupted from the sudden barbarism and bestiality of man to man. The writers tried to grapple with their fractured psyches with the basic question 'why'? Why did the shared social, cultural, traditional and historical fabric collapse? Why did we turn killers and violators? Why did we forget the past? Why did we give in to rage rather than reason— the questions are endless. The fictional writings took up these questions in one story after another, in one novel after another, looking for answers but failing to find any.

Fictional historical narratives about the Partition developed basically on two lines. There were those who re-evoked the senseless carnage, the horrifying brutalities and the numbing meaningless violence that the different communities perpetrated on each other. Then there were those narratives that focused on the fear, the agony, the insanity which resulted from the sudden dislocation of people, uprooting them cruelly from places which had been home to them for generations, only to be thrown into a strange alien land and told that henceforth this was their home. The suffering and anguish that resulted from being wrenched away from familiar surroundings forever, is sensitively delivered in these stories.

Manto's 'Toba Tek Singh' also falls into this category of stories that deals with the theme of Partition concentrating on the tragedy of dislocation and exile. The mad man Bishan Singh who hails from a small village in Punjab, Toba Tek Singh, is unable to take in the fact that

the division of the subcontinent requires him to cross the border line and forget his homeland forever. In the story, he climbs a tree that he can't get down from the tree the reason is he does not want to stay either of the countries. Bishan Singh refuses to comply with the orders, preferring to give up his life instead.

All these writers who wrote about the tragic uprooting of people emphasized the same point over and over again. What emerges from a reading of these stories is the realization that geographical divisions are possible but how can one divide a shared history, a shared memory and a shared consciousness? It is obvious that the decision makers never took the ordinary man into account and what the Partition would do to him. Thus they could never anticipate the great human tragedy that followed in the wake of their political decision.

Manto has written extensively on the theme of Partition with stark realism and powerful evocation of the shocking horror of those times. As Alok Bhatia observes, these stories 'are written by a man who knows that after such ruination there can neither be forgiveness nor any forgetting.' Stories like 'Thanda Gosht' ('Cold Meat'), 'Khol Do' (Open It)J '1919 Ki Baat' ('It happened in 1919'), 'TobaTek Singh' and 'Titwal Ka Kutta' ('The Dog of Titwal') are just a few of the nerve shattering stories which recreate the honor of the Partition. What is remarkable in these stories is the completely detached tone of the narrator as well as an evocation of the event through suggestiveness rather than details. We are just given a tip of the iceberg, as it were and left to imagine the rest. This mode of working through suggestiveness increases the horror of the stories manifold and at the same time saves them from being merely a perverse indulgence in violence on the one hand and sentimentalization and thereby dilution of the real human tragedy on the other. *Siyah Hashiye* or *Black Margins*was a full length work on the Partition theme,

brought out by Manto. This book consists of short fragments, sketches on the events of the Partition. It is notable for its black humour and also for Manto's determination not to name the religion of any of the perpetrators described in these brief sketches. For him all were equally responsible. It was not just a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh who was the question but man who had turned into a beast having lost all his tolerance.

Nation splitting and nation making involves the anxiety and pain of naming places that were other places until yesterday. The theme of his stories is loss of memory and the death of imagination, which perfectly manifests the chaos after the Partition. The narrative strategy of Manto provides the reader a space to go beyond the inhuman effects of such traumatic experiences. Manto's experience with such traumatic experience has shaped his consciousness of his generations beyond borders. It is his deep introspection of the burning situations and conditions of the partition and its effects that he has given literal shape in the form of short stories. The way Manto has written his stories makes him very distinctive from other short story writers writing on Partition. His stories not only carry an objective note of grim realities of partition but an element of satirical and ironical sensibility of the Partition. His women characters are more or less helpless because of poverty they adjust with the contemporary social set up to lead normal life.

Partition was the turning point in the history of the subcontinent post-1947. It gave rise to sectarianism and large-scale disbelief in the "Other" in both India and Pakistan. However, the literary responses to the event do celebrate the memories of the commonly shared heritage, and the cultural and geographical space between Hindus-Sikhs and Muslims before August 1947. The Partition corpus strengthens the composite culture and the plurality of the subcontinent and the belief of the literatures in the ever-present humanism, not only in the victims but in the

perpetrators too, as in the case of Manto's Ishar Singh. These writers did not believe that religion was a divisive force and blamed the hunger for power and the political indecisiveness of a handful of leaders which robbed people of their homes and hearths, of their memories and of the sheer belief in humanism. Such writings establish Partition as a human tragedy rather than a political one, an aspect most cherished by the "historical" discourses on the event. A study of such literary writings needs to be included in the reference lists on the study of Partition of India. They are important as they direct us to an alternative reading of the "master narrative", though one is certainly free to establish the credentials of the authors of such texts and then include them in his/her research. Such studies having literature at the centre can promote comparative literature and historical cultural studies and with an emphasis on literary cultures of a society can reconstruct history in a new manner. It will be a fitting tribute to Manto if his stories and ideas are able to find their rightful place in the writing of the history of Partition of the subcontinent by scholars especially among the ones sponsored by the individual nation states of India and Pakistan.

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12

Distress in Mulk Raj Anand's *A Pair of Mustachios* and *Other Stories*

—*Dr. Komala D.*

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was one of the most popular writers in Indian writing in English who wrote sixteen novels, twelve anthologies of short stories and thousands of letters have appeared in the Indian literary landscape in nineteen thirties. He was an outstanding story writer known for his depiction of the fate of marginalized poor and perceived the path of compassionate humanism as his pilgrimage. Some of his creative writings in shorter fiction are *The Lost Child and other stories*, The *Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories*, *The Tractor and the Corn God and Other Stories, The Power of Darkness and Others Stories, A Pair of Mustachios and Other Stories* and so on. Anand's commitment to humanism is also seen in his short stories like his novels. He is a great critic of contemporary society who probes the society through his critical realism and proclaimed dignity of a man as supreme value. As M.N.Naik says, "The stories of Mulk Raj Anand evince the same fecundity which characterizes his longer fiction."

This article portrays an account of the suffering of masses across the country as represented by characters, especially commonman as agents of defining their distress

in his collection of short stories, *A Pair of Mustachios and Other Stories.* He begins with an artistic statement on how the Indian society has differentiated the people to have their mustachios "There are various kinds of mustachios worn in my country to mark the boundaries between the various classes of people" (P. 9). Anand satirically reflects how various styles of mustachios create lines of demarcation between the classes. Mustachios are symbols of prides, prejudices and profession oriented like lion mustache for kings, tiger mustache for feudal gentries, goat mustache for shopkeepers, Charlie Chaplin mustache for clerks and endless styles of mustachios appropriate to their profession. Khan Azam Khan is proud to have his mustachios upwards because his ancestors have worked for great Mughals. It is his birth right to have a privilege of keeping mustachios upwards and he always twists them upwards proudly. He goes to moneylender to pawn his wife's gold nose-ring and becomes angry when he sees the baniya's mustache is twisted upwards. He warns him that "I tell you; turn the tip of your mustache down if you value your life!" (P. 13). The Baniya turns down the tip of his mustache after completing the business with Azam Khan. Even after becoming a pauper, Khan twists his mustache upwards to keep up the status of his ancient and noble family. He claims proudly with peasants that his father was a Sultan. Peasants laugh behind him and the cunning baniya twists his mustache upwards. Azam Khan is the mouthpiece of the society, Anand mocks at his attitude satirically. Even the common peasants laugh at his attitude. The common-man of Anand is capable of measuring the discriminatory and paradoxical nature of the society which does not allow having their choice of mustache, where Azam Khan is ready to lose anything for keeping the baniya's mustache downwards.

In *The Story On the Border,* Anand reflects how the aspirations of people have been killed on the wartorn

border. Shamus has been imprisoned by the British government for listening to the talk of Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. His wife Karima breaks the stones as a labour to feed her young son. When she was away from home on work, aeroplanes started hovering over her village by dropping bombs. The entire village was in fire and she runs towards her hut to rescue her son. She finds him in the flame, his eyes swollen blood is oozing out in place of tears. She lifts him and jumps over the flame after flame with the hope that he will survive, but he slips into the flame. She beats her chest with fisticuffs by cursing the fate. Anand created the scene of boy's death horrifically to indicate that war is against mankind which killed so many people apart from creating a permanent injury mentally and physically to the people who have survived from the jaws of death in the war. Karima's agony reaches the crescendo with the death of her son to show the entire world that war is dangerous to mankind and kills mercilessly. A war surely kills the hopes and aspirations of mankind which Anand portrays through the character Karima who is an agent to represent the commonman lived in border of the country.

Rumour is another story tells about an unemployed carpenter Dhandu from the village Deogarh, who gets the news from his fellow villager Bisheshwar that a factory in Bariwal town gives employment to skilled labour. He walks miles after miles for three days in the scorching rays of the sun to reach the town. The sentry at the gate of the mill does not allow him inside but humiliates him by abusing and hounding "Go, go there are no jobs" (P-58) furiously shook the double barreled gun and stamped on his feet. Dhandu lost the hopes of getting a job in factory and left the place disgustingly. His legs trembled and body becomes numb. He became a short of insane by murmuring himself while walking along the road that "A rumour! So it was only a rumour, a rumour!" This state of insanity has not

allowed him to hear the horn of a lorry which came from the side of a street. He recalls that "And Bisheshwar said every mazdoor gets thirty rupees... and *Angrezi* houses to live in and meat to eat instead of lentils and rice – and there was really no. . . A rumour. . ." (P. 60). His state of mind has not responded to the call of police and the honk of lorry which crushed his ribs by running over him. The scarcity of employment was so big that the cavalcade of labours from across the country moved from place to place to work for a meager wages. Britishers have started some manufacturing industries to exploit the cheap Indian labour. In such a momentum a rumour of an employment has killed Dhandu before the people could drag him out from under the lorry. In the end Anand makes tragi-comic statement that "A rumour has reached Deogarh some months later that Dhandu, the old carpenter of the village, had become a resident of the celestial heavens". Anand had great concern towards the exploiting labour force, by portraying their sufferings in his works; he wanted to create an empathetic awakening.

The cobbler Soudagar in *The Cobbler and Machine* had a passion to buy a leather sewing machine as he has instigated by the author through the picture of machine. A cotton dealer has bought a sewing machine from abroad to the cobbler on loan basis. Author was happy for two reasons; foremost cobbler has promised him a pair of boots free of cost, secondly the machine was almost like the picture he had given. The author visited the cobbler frequently to get his shoes, but his shoes were hung up on the door unfinished because the cobbler was busy in making dozen of Indian shoes to repay the interest of debt. He produced more and more shoes which could not meet to pay off his debt as a result he has to die a slow death. Anand's protagonists suffer in his stories and get sympathy and compassion from readers. With respect to stress of the writer, Shyam Asnani points out that "In order to arouse

karuna or aesthetic sympathy in the reader, the novelist projects the sufferings of his protagonist artistically, sincerely and impartially."

In the back drop of highlighting the sufferings of the socially weakened, marginalized, corned and under-privilaged sections of society and paving a way for their redemption, upliftment and identity, one could witness in the writer a conscious option to defend the philosophy of humanism and universal brotherhood.

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13

Confront Rather than Retreat: Revisiting Draupadi

—Shashikala G.T.

Mahasweta Devi is a renowned Bengali writer and an activist for whom writing is a mission. She is very serious writer who exposes all sorts of exploitations and oppressions that prevail in the post-independent feudal society. She is actively committed for the cause of the marginalized communities/sections of the society. Various problems of these people find expressions in her works. She writes about the problems of landless laborers, brickiln workers, share croppers, slum dwellers, bonded laborers, untouchables and the tribal people. She is more concerned the problems of the denotified tribes like Lodhas, Kherias and Shabars

Mahasweta Devi became deeply involved in welfare of the tribal communities from early in life, and worked extensively in this area since then. Her pioneering work with the Sabars, a de-notified tribal community in the Purulia district of West Bengal, earned her the name "The Mother of the Sabars". During the course of a long and illustrious career as a social worker in tribal welfare, she was closely associated with the West Bengal Oraon Welfare Society and the All Indian Vandhua Liberation Morcha and

was the founding member of Aboriginal United Association. She has also edited a tribal magazine, Bartika, since 1980.

Mahasweta Devi was recognized for her life-time contributions in both literature and social work, with the Sahitya Akademi award in 1979, the Padmashree award in 1986, the Jnanpith award in 1997, the Magsaysay award (referred to as the Asian Nobel Prize) in 1997 and the Deshikottam award in 1999. In the last forty years, Mahasweta Devi has published twenty collections of short stories and close to a hundred novels, primarily in her native language of Bengali. Her short story Rudaali and the novel Hajar Churashir Ma (Mother of 1984, Govind Nihalini director) were made into internationally acclaimed films. Many of her writings have been translated into various Indian and foreign languages and have won her international repute

In her work as a brilliant writer and a noted activist, we witness protests of a rebellious mind, a protest against oppression and injustice, a protest for the liberation of the most down-trodden sections of the Indian society. In response to the question, "What would you like to do for the rest of your life?" in a 1998 interview, Mahasweta Devi replied, "Fight for the tribals, downtrodden, underprivileged and write creatively if and when I find the time". She currently resides in Calcutta, India.

Radha Chakravarty writes in her book 'Feminism and Contemporary Women Writers' that 'Mahasweta's current reputation as a writer rests largely on her own self-projection as champion of the tribal cause and decrier of class prejudice' [94]: Championing the cause of tribals in India she is particularly devoted to ensure their economic, political and social security. Speaking about the plight and depravity of the tribals in an interview with Gayatri Spivak, Mahasweta Devi says:

India makes progress, produces steel, the tribals give up their land, and receive nothing. They are suffering spectators of the India that is travelling towards the twenty-first century..... Although they fought bravely against the British, they have not been treated as part of Indian's freedom struggle. [Imaginary maps: iii]

Mahasweta Devi has represented the trials and tribulations of the downtrodden tribals. As a social activist, she has spent many years crusading for the rights of Dalit. In her much acclaimed short story "Draupadi" [first appeared in Agni Garbha[Womb of Fires] a collection of loosely connected short narratives], Mahasweta Devi ventured to write an episode from the great epic Mahabharata. The English reading world got to appreciate the work through Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's translation of her collection of short stories entitled "Breast Stories" [2010]

"Draupadi is a story of Dopdi Majhen; it is a story of victimization of a women who dares to confront the oppressive system. It narrates the predicament of a tribal woman caught between the pulls of subsistence living and the logic of feudalistic— patriarchal state and its allied system. Dopdi, a naxalities informer— activist, is a Santhal. She, along with her husband Dulna, had rebelled against the oppressive state— feudal nexus. In the drought, Surja Sahu— feudal kingpin of the area in connivance with the state— had got two tube wells and three wells dug within the compound of his two houses. When the whole Birbhum was reeling under famine, he and his class refused to let tribals share their unlimited water sources. This instigated the rage of the suffering tribals and let them to join the naxalities group, headed by Arijit, and culminated in the revenge killing of Surja Sahu and his sons. In the aftermath of this killing, and consequent upon the brutal and indiscriminate manhunt launched by the state through 'Operation Bakuli' Dopdi and Dulna were forced to flee and leave the life of fugitives.

Working in different guises with different land owners in and around Jharkhani belt, they, completely sacrificing their family and desires, dedicated themselves to the cause of movement and the social utopia and economic freedom it promise. They kept on informing their comrades about the movement of the army. Their dedication and their ability to survive created terror among moneylenders, landlords, etc. in order to suppress the naxalite movement, the state launches 'Operation Jharkhani', initially under Arjun Singh and then under Senanayak, "a specialist in combat and extreme left politics". Dulna who could not survive this onslaught hunt, fails to match Senanayak's cunning. Betrayed by his people, he was entrapped while drinking water and countered. Since then, Dopdi is on the most wanted list of the police and his living life anonymously. It is at this stage the story begins. So far she has proved a match for Senanayak's cunning and as, so far, eluded his grasp. The setting of "Draupadi" is the peasant rebellion in the Naxalbari area of the northern part of West Bengal in 1967. The tragedy of the exploitation of the landless peasants in India, and particularly West Bengal is an ageless one. So is the history of revolt, from the Sannyasis and the indigo cultivators to the Naxalbari explosion. The people near Naxalbari in North Bengal are mostly tribals— the Medis, Lepchas, Bhutias, Santhals, Orangs. The zamindars extend the petty bait of paddy seeds, the oxen team, a handful of rice and negligible wages. In return, they reap a lion's share of the harvest, at the cost of the landless labourer's back-breaking toil. In great Bengal famine of 1943, starving people died in front of well stocked food shops. A peasant differs from a landless labourer in terms of ownership position since he cultivated his own land. The migrants like Dopdi or her husband Dulna Majhi are forced to work for wages well below government fixation of minimum wages. They are not fighting for bigger academic issues. They are fighting for bare minimum needs to survive. The target of these

movements was the long established oppression of the landless peasantry and itinerant farm workers, sustained through an unofficial government – landlord collision. The Indian government was able to crack down the rebellion with exceptional brutality on the Naxalites destroying the rebellious sections of the rural population, most significantly the tribal.

Draupadi is represented before us between two versions of name, Dopdi [tribal name] and Draupadi [classical ancient name]. It takes us to the story of epic world where Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas was publicity humiliated when Yudhisthira loses her in game of chess to the Kauravas. Draupadi is in a state of seclusion and insists that she should not be taken away but is dragged to the assembly hall by her loose hair which is tantamount to rape in symbolic terms. Dushasana further goes on and attempts to strip her publicly by pulling her sari but jails to do so as the sari continues to lengthen endlessly due to the divine intervention of lord Krishna. Draupadi vows that she will not do her hair till the time she washes her hair with the blood of Duryodhana and thus avenge the violation of her dignity. She exhibits her violated condition by displaying the unbraided hair that was an instrument of her violation

Mahasweta Devi reconstructs the myth and portrays her protagonist— Dopdi who breaks away from the shackles of false notions of shame. She emerges as empowered who can challenge her assilants even when unarmed. Dopdi uses her feminine nakedness as a weapon against her enemy. She unveils herself to turn the violence that she endured, upon the man responsible for the violation against her. One may find a clear contrast between the classical Draupadi and tribal Dopdi. The tribalized form Dopdi is the proper name of the ancient Draupadi. At the close of the story, she becomes the object of her feelings, instead of simply being viewed as the 'other' portrayed as the object of male desires and fears. In the epic world, Mahasweta

Devi endorses her woman characters with the freedom of speech. Remarkably enough, she writes an episode from Mahabharata, amore heterogeneous text then Ramayana. In epic, Draupadi serves a single incident of polyandry, a lesser known marriage system in India. She is the wife of the five sons of impotent Pandu. In the patriarchal and patronymic context of the epic world, Draupadi becomes singular and her husbands are pluralized. The story questions this singularity because Dopdi is placed first as a comrade activist monogamous marriage and later in a situation of multiple rapes. The classical character of Draupadi is used as a form to prepare the ground of heroic deeds. Her legitimized pluralization as a wife amongst her husbands is emphasized to highlight male glory: she becomes the cause of crucial battle. Her eldest husband Yudhisthir is at the verge of losing her in the game of dice, when the enemy chief Duryodhana makes an effort to pull at Draupadi's saree. She prays to Lord Krishna and as a divine miracle one sees her to be infinitely clothed and she cannot be publicly stripped off. Mahasweta Devi in her way to rewrite this episode has attempted to, the deconstruction and the reconstruction of the mythic figure of Draupadi, as a tribal Dopdi was not entitled a heroic name, this pious name was given to her by the Brahmin mistress. The aboriginal Dopdi's name signifies the mark of her distance from the top. In her derivation of Dopdi from Draupadi, Devi has made an implicit point of view. One may find a clear contrast between the classical Draupadi and her. In the earlier case the intervention of God prevented male lust from unclothing her. On the contrary the tribal Dopdi is gang raped by police refuses to be clothed by men in office

The story opens with discussions between two medallion uniforms: What is this, a tribal called Dopdi ? The list of names I bought has nothing like it! How can anyone have an unlisted name?.... Draupadi Mejhen. Born

the year her mother threshed rice at Surja Sahu [killed]'s at Bakuli. Surja Sahu's wife gave her the name. [Spivak 392]

Dopdi Mejhen, twenty-seven year old is on the list of wanted. The entire action of the story revolves around the search for Dopdi until she is apprehended. Dulna and Dopdi worked at harvests rotating between Birbhum, Burdwan and Bankura. In 1971, in the famous operation Bakuli, when three villages were cordonned off and gunned down, they too lay on the ground, faking dead. Later, Dopdi and Dulna went underground for a long-time and worked at the house of virtually every landowner. Then, the forest of Jharkhani is surrounded by real soldiers, the army enters and splits the battlefield. In one of the search army informant Dukhiram GharAi see a young Santhal man lying on his stomach on a flat stone, dipping his face to drink water. The soldiers shoot him as he lays drinking water and realized that it was dulna. But the search still continues for dopdi. All measures are taken for her entrapment.

Very soon Dopdi Mejhen is apprehended and understanding her defeat she readies herself for the next action of warning her comrades:

> 'Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the forest, and ululates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings. The echo of the call travels far'. (Breast Stories : 34)

Very soon, Dopdi got apprehended and was sent camp. She was interrogated for about an hour, but no one touched her and she was allowed to sit on a canvas camp stool.

At 8:57 pm Senanayak's dinner hour approached, and saying 'Make her. Do the needful' he disappeared. {Breast Stories 34}

Then a billion moons pass. A billion lunar years. Opening her eyes after a million light years, Draupadi, strangely enough, sees the sky and moon. Slowly the bloodied nail heads shift from her brain.... She feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts..... She senses that her Vagina is bleeding. How many came to make her?..... Shaming her, a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye.....Again she thinks, "How many? four-five-six-seven, then Draupadi has passed out. [Breast Stories 35]

Senanayak hunts Dopdi as a women on whom he can apply the tactic of rape and believes that this form of oppression will weaken her and will force her to name the comrades. But Dopdi still possesses an indomitable spirit which is seen in the next day as Dopdi remains publicly naked at her own insistence. Her defiant behavior causes commotion in the camp. Senanayak walks out surprised and sees Draupadi, naked walking towards him in the bright sunlight with her head eye. She laugh's and says,

> 'The object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?..... what's the use of cloths? You can strip me, but how can you cloth me again? Are you a man?.....

There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, kounter me— come on, kounter me? [Breast Stories 36-37]

Surprisingly, Draupadi confront her enemy Senanayak with her two mangled breasts and for the first time, Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed 'target'. So, Dopdi represents millions of tribal woman who are fighting against oppression and who dare to challenge and confront imperialism as well as patriarchy. At the end of the story, Senanayak is forced to confront his powerlessness in the presence of a naked Dopdi. It is an easy task for Senanayak to have Dopdi's body forcefully disrobed, raped

and mutilated. However, he does not possess the power to cover the marks of violence inflicted upon Dopdi.

Senanayak is an "elderly Bengali specialist in combat and extreme— Left politics" (Breast Stories 21). According to Spivak, he is also a "pluralist aesthete". He represents the First World scholar in search of the Third World to analyze and decipher its coded complexities; instead, he ends up mislaying the reality of the Third World.. Senanayak relies on the "Army handbook" to instruct his subordinates in combat. In his view, the most "despicable and repulsive" mode of fighting is guerilla warfare which is carried out through the use of primitive weapons like scythe and machete. Dulna and Dopdi excel in the use of these very weapons. Senanayak considers "annihilation" to be the only solution for putting an end to the violence wrought by tribal. However, the intellectual in Senanayak respects his opponent. He is an avid reader of theory so as to understand the working of the mind of the tribal in revolt. His readings of anti-fascist theories have taught him that "in order to destroy the enemy, become one" (BS 22).

Senanayak represents the First World intellectuals who desire to be 'experts' in the Third World. They proclaim to appreciate its 'freedom' even in difference, simultaneously, willing to transform it into the First World. On the other hand, Dopdi is Devi's attempt to show the differences between the knowledgeable First World scholars and the mutethrough-language-incomprehensibility of Third World subalterns. Dopdi loses her position as a subject in the course of the story but manages to recover it at the climax. This makes her as dissimilar from Draupadi – her popular namesake from ancient history – as it can get. Draupadi, in the ancient Hindu epic Mahabharata, is the example of a woman who is married off to several men. This legitimatization of Draupadi's pluralized wedding is

an instance of 181 the glorification of patriarchy. However, Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi is a pluralized member of rebellion against the repressive establishment but she has a single husband. Devi questions this "singularity" assigned to the royal Draupadi with reference to her husbands in her characterization of the tribal and activist Dopdi who has a monogamous marriage but later endures the torture of multiple rape. But Dopdi – unlike her counterpart Draupadi bound to the patriarchal ideology in the epic – manages to disentangle herself from the chains of patriarchal shame, humiliation and victimization. Dopdi does not seek any benign Krishna to come and clothe her, and save her honour. Instead she wages war upon her tormentors by refusing to cover her naked body.

Slavoj Žižek's concept of "the negation of negation" is implied in the situation of Dopdi's ferocious stance against Senanayak and his subordinates. He says that the negative power endangering an individual's identity is, in fact, a positive condition of it (The Sublime 176). For Senanayak, Dopdi is the embodiment of negativity. She is nothing more than a "brute" who, in Senanayak's view, can't be "dispatched" by the "approved" method. On the other hand, Senanayak believes that he has the "proper perspective" about the "credentials" that entail surviving with honour in the world. And a life of honour, for him, involves "apprehension and elimination" of the tribal rebels. Senanayak basically considers himself to be a positive force that possesses the power to destroy the enemy and deliver the present world's "legacy" into the youth's hands ("Draupadi" 23-24). But he fails to understand that the very identity of his position of power is structured through a negative relationship to the mutilated figure of Dopdi. Hence the negativity as represented by Dopdi has a positive function in spite of Senanayak's intentions.

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14

Baburao Bagul's Mother: Subaltern Mother

—Dr. Nasreen Banu M. Jamadar

For Dalit woman her community is everything she is considered as other and it is influence of tradition created by patriarchal values at all levels in society throughout her life. Her struggle is for basic needs as food or water and in her subjection to sexual and domestic violence. Thus asserts Gayatri Spivak in her essay "Can the Subalterns Speak?":

> The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.
>
> (Gayatri Spivak)

According to the general thrust of Spivak's argument in this essay, her final assertion that the "subaltern cannot speak" denies the gendered subaltern the ability to represent herself and achieve voice. Spivak's contention that "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" also precludes the possibility of others representing the subaltern woman save as a blank or empty space. The present paper tries to depict this reality portrayed by Baburao Bagul, a pioneer of Marathi Dalit Literature, in his short story *Mother*. Mainly, the author of this article desires to spotlight on the character of the Dalit woman

who is illtreated not by the society at large but also by their own family.

Baburao presents short story *Mother* as a story of an unfortunate mother. Baburao Bagul traces the history of an unnamed Dalit mother's subjection within the patriarchal system in his short story *Mother*. Bagul demonstrates how Pandu's mother's 'bad mother' status emanates from her insistence on parenting her child on her own terms. Although initially she does not succumb to community pressures, she does suffer defeat when her own son, Pandu, fails to understand or appreciate her sacrifices.

Bagul draws the readers' attention to the complex web of circumstances Pandu's mother maneuvers in order to be a successful 'good' mother. The torrent of abuse her community hurls at her and Pandu's rejection of her makes her sacrifices invisible. In recreating her story, Bagul attempts to make the subaltern's group 'speak' as a poor Dalit woman in the outskirts of urban India Pandu's mother has been working in construction sites in order to provide food for her family. Her decrepit husband had been dependent on her until his death by tuberculosis. Bagul emphasizes how her caste, class, and gender conspire together to create an impossible space from where she is expected to perform her role as an ideal mother. As a Dalit woman she could not have had access to education and therefore few employment opportunities except low-skilled work as required in construction sites. Money would be meager and exploitation of labor would be high. As discussed above, these women are often subject to sexual exploitation by their employers. Dire poverty and fear of losing their jobs would prevent them from complaining because in many cases they would be the only breadwinners for their families. On returning home they would be subject to patriarchy and would have to negotiate their financial independence with their subordinate status as wife and mother.

Bagul exposes these contradictions of the subaltern woman's reality and attempts to advocate for her own way of mothering which may not subscribe to the ideology of motherhood. Bagul depicts the repressive patriarchy that blames its failures on the woman while putting the woman through unbearable emotional and physical tortures. Pandu's father as a Dalit man could not have had access to better jobs than what his wife had.

Bagul indicates that because the Dalit man could not earn the household income and had to rely on his wife, he felt doubly emasculated. Outside the domestic space he was crippled by his caste identity and now inside the domestic sphere, his gender prerogative of being the provider was compromised owing to his failing health. While he remained restricted to his room, Pandu's mother labored under back-breaking work at "construction sites, hauling bricks and cement" only to ensure "kitchen fires" could be lit to cook food and money was available for procuring "medicines, and milk and fruit" for her husband and Pandu (Bagul 187). In *Dalit Feminism: A Psycho-Social Analysis of Indian English Literature* Anita Ghosh concurs, "The Dalit woman, more often than not, is dependent on her own labour. She labours outside her home from morning till evening" (58).

Instead of being supportive to his wife's extraordinary work, the decrepit husband believed that her full-blown beauty "automatically meant that perhaps she consistently sold her beauty, gave it away for a price" (Bagul 187). He subjected her to indecent examinations for "proof of her infidelity" by scrutinizing her "feet, her thighs, her breasts, her sari and blouse...her lips and cheeks" every night after she returned from work. These nightmarish experiences traumatized Pandu's mother for life because her manual labor at construction sites and her monetary income were not good enough evidences of her dedication as a wife and mother. Pandu's father also abused his wife physically and aimed to destroy her beauty that sharply contrasted with,

and seemed to augment, his own sense of helplessness owing to "his disease, his failing strength, his joblessness" (Bagul 187). Thus, the physically and socially crippled man vents his frustration on his abler wife whose beauty, strength, and employment seem to devalue his gendered role as a male. His total dependence on her also breeds this jealousy and dissatisfaction because it robs him of his masculine prerogatives. But he forgets that her youthful strength and ability run the family and supply his medicines. Bagul focuses on the predicament of a subaltern woman who is forced to rise above her gendered role of a submissive and male-dependent entity because of her partner's inabilities but is condemned for her transgression. Bagul highlights another aspect of the subaltern woman's plight: While she was mortified by her decrepit husband's jealousy of her physical beauty and her financial independence, after his death Pandu's mother continues to be victimized by the men in her community who lust for her and view her independence as a challenge to their male prerogatives. The women find her husbandless status and her physical appeal threatening to their conjugal lives and direct their condemnation of her in terms of her mothering. Moreover, her affair with an upper class and upper-caste man aids the community to treat her as a whore because traditionally a widow mother is expected to be an asexual being and to be devoted to her son and dependent on the mercies of her community. The community blames her because it cannot accept a low-caste poor but beautiful widow fending for herself and her son without seeking help of other men and women and without surrendering to the lust of male neighbors. Also, because patriarchy has created the ideology of motherhood in order to control female sexuality, the specter of the mother-figure as a sexual being threatens and disrupts gender discourse (The Silken Swing 32). Here, Bagul centers the subaltern mother's experience in terms of the multiple strands of repression she has to negotiate. Pandu's mother emerges as a "bad mother" who

challenges the notions of patriarchal motherhood and does not forgo her personal sexual pleasures. She refuses to compromise her selfhood while being a committed mother. While her neighbors condemn her as a whore, she ignores them because if her body can fetch security for her child, she will not hesitate to utilize it for his sake. However, when Pandu begins to reject her, she is shattered and silenced. Pandu is too young and inexperienced to realize that his mother dares the oppressive patriarchal ideology of motherhood while keeping his welfare in mind. Bagul explores the struggle Pandu's mother undergoes to reassert her maternal abilities amidst community claims of her bad mothering.

Pandu recalls how she had adorned herself in a new sari and jewelry and had basked in her own physical beauty by caressing "her own arms and breasts" and admiring the "new silver chain around her neck" (Bagul 185). These images blend perfectly with that of a loose woman being showered upon with gifts from a lover, an immoral image Pandu's classmates had painted of his mother. When Pandu breaks down "with a heartrending cry" which draws the neighbors to his house, they abuse the mother as a "shameless tart." While Pandu does not try to defend his mother against the obscenities hurled against her, his mother enters the scene "with lightning steps, knowing he would be hungry, and waiting" (186). No sooner does she see the cluster of women, her "envious enemies," at her doorstep than she realizes that Pandu has indeed joined the "enemy ranks" (186). The men lust for her and strip "her bare in their mind's eye" and women burn "with envy" but cannot take their eyes off her attractive presence. Only Pandu views her with his "new-found knowledge" and observes her "tightly-worn sari, the careless confidence, the defiance in her walk" and considers her lips "reddened... with betel juice" as "evil" (186-7). Pandu is now "convinced of her guilt" and he is prepared to "take sides against

her" (187). Just because Pandu's mother fails or refuses to preserve the chaste image of a helpless widow-mother, dependent on her neighbors for physical and emotional support, she is condemned by her community and her son. Bagul reveals the complex network of pressures Pandu's mother encounters here: the men lust after her and the women hate her; they judge her as a failed mother and use it as a weapon against her; and her son in his innocence cannot understand her own way of loving him. When Pandu's mother confronts the "suspicion in (Pandu's) eyes, the glance that took her in from top to toe," she recognizes the "accusations" her "TB-ridden, suspicious, nagging" husband had hurled against her during his ailing life. The past humiliations loom large in her mind when she encounters Pandu's suspicion. Not willing to suffer similar indignities again and this time from her son, Pandu's mother directs her "fury" towards Pandu for refusing to see the reality of her sacrifice that his father had denied to acknowledge:

> "Die, you bastard!Like your father who died of his own evil" (188).

Pandu, a mere child, does not understand these words that bear venom not against him but against society. He childishly concludes "his mother did not need him any more" because why else would she wish him death. Because his mother in all her frustration seems so alien to him at this point, Pandu, employing his child's logic, decides for himself that his mother "had murdered his father and would murder him" (188). Bagul underscores the flow of criticism Pandu's mother has to encounter simply because she is an unconventional mother who fulfills her maternal duties in a non-conformist way. "Can this mother be blamed for her kind of mothering?" Bagul asks.

Since society condemns her as a worthless mother who leaves her child alone and hungry while consorting with her lover, Bagul portrays Pandu's mother's concern for her

son in order to speak for and represent her commitment. She notices his "thin, spindly arms...concave stomach... and the whitish pallor of his skin" and shudders at the thought of losing him to TB like his father. Her intensive mothering reasserts itself when she worries about Pandu's health,

> 'Have you been coughing?...do you feel feverish? Don't be stubborn, tell mother'(188).

Bagul wants the reader to recognize the intensive mothering that she undertakes in spite of her relationship with the overseer. Soon the mother feels guilty about having "neglected him...hadn't even touched him" as she was overwhelmed by her lover's "strong arms" to which she surrendered gladly after ten years of "loneliness" (189).

Because Pandu's mother begins to retreat into the ideology of motherhood, she feels guilty for having neglected her son in favor of her lover. Realizing her lack of attention to Pandu and feeling remorse for shouting at him in anger, she apologizes to him:

> 'Son, forgive me...I've brought you some new clothes...come eat, son. Forgive me, I'm just an old silly.'

This is where the subaltern Dalit mother re-inscribes the code of ideal motherhood and dismisses empowered mothering. The ideology of motherhood is so deep-seated that the mother condemns herself as a failure when she recognizes her transgression of prescribed codes. She exercises to parent her child differently and wiped out when she internalizes the ideology of motherhood. Bagul articulates this tale of courageous mothering that is silenced by the mother herself and highlights her struggle to raise her child which speaks of her subaltern condition. Poverty, loneliness, absence of simple pleasures make the subaltern woman take on a lover who can support her economically in exchange for physical commitment. Is Pandu's mother guilty in engaging in this relationship with the overseer which ultimately helps both Pandu and herself?

The child loses confidence in his mother who does not conform. While his mother pleads with him to wear the new clothes and eat some food, Pandu, "disgusted at the thought of his classmates jeering at him, abusing her in front of him," lashes out at her, "'Whore! I spit on your clothes'" and runs away. His rejection and abuse of his mother will not stop them from humiliating her but as a child he is not equipped to recognize the courage in her transgression of the ideology of motherhood. Consequently, "[h]er pain knew no bounds" writes Bagul in describing the rejected mother's feelings. A mother who lived ten years of her life as a widow, forever tormented by men around her, "only for [Pandu]" and had "tried so hard to love" him finds her world crumbling around her when that son becomes an accomplice of the community and accuses her of being a whore and abandons her.

"Crying helplessly" she recalls all the men who had tortured her, including her husband, the neighbors, and now her son (189).

Bagul reveals the sacrifices she makes only for her son: how she 'could have lived a merry life' with either of the men who offered to marry her, like Mohammed Maistry who offered her a car in exchange of marriage, Walji Seth who tried to bribe her to become his mistress, and Dagdu who wanted to surrender his life's savings to her. But she refused all of them and 'gave up everything, son.' (190)

> The mother's complete devotion to Pandu's well-being becomes articulated when she confesses,
>
> 'I lived for you, hoping you'd grow up, be my support, but you have betrayed me...' (190).

Had she done what her community and her son thought she was doing, she could not have secured food and clothes for Pandu, could not have sent him to school. After several years of physical and emotional spousal torment followed by widowed isolation, Pandu's mother has made the mistake of attempting to be an outlaw mother claiming

selfhood as a lover as well as a mother to Pandu. She thus transgresses socially-sanctioned sacrificial motherhood and earns the condemnation of all, including her son's.

While she fought against the community whenever they berated her son for her supposed "business," she crumbles under the weight of her son's disparagement, misunderstanding, and rejection. But confronting Pandu's criticism is a different matter altogether because, as a mother, her son's condemnation nullifies her sacrifices.

Ultimately, in sheer helplessness and dejection over her son's rejection, she surrenders herself to the strong brown arms of her overseer-lover. She cannot escape his claim on her body in order to embrace her son who returns to her doorstep, thereby perpetuating the unbridgeable gap between them and fixing in Pandu's mind the image of her as a whore. Her purpose of living for her son stands completely defeated.

Bagul discusses her story because it needs to be told. A Dalit subaltern woman has to suffer multiple lines of repression: as a low caste poor woman she is sexually exploited by her lover whose financial gifts support her family; as a wife she supports her decrepit husband but has to bear the torment emanating from his emasculated frustrations; as a beautiful widow she is a victim of her male neighbors' lust and their women's envy; as a mother she is expected to be a self-sacrificing, self-composed mother who will provide emotional and physical support constantly to her son. Bagul represents the impossibility of meeting these demands.

It is rather intriguing that Pandu's mother has no name or identity except in terms of her relationship with Pandu, reminding us of Rich who describes the ideology of motherhood as requiring the absence of selfhood for the mother. Consequently, the breach of that relationship leaves Pandu's mother with no social identity in a society

hostile to the claims of a subaltern woman's sexual independence and refusal to adhere to prescribed codes of motherhood. In the Dalit context, the son's rejection disempowers the subaltern mother who succumbs to the ideology of motherhood and cannot assert her independent maternal identity. Ultimately, the subaltern mother cannot enact her action, or, symbolically 'speak'. Bagul, in tracing Pandu's mother's narrative, speaks for her and her outfit that would not be otherwise archived because she herself surrenders to the pressures of dominant ideologies. Although both the subaltern mother exercises activity in her own ways, she is rendered invisible by the social norms and expectations of her respective communities.

Social barring, lack of helpful legal safety and financial, civilizing misuse has kept the Dalits at sub-human living conditions for centuries. These days, many among the younger age group are able to make better lives for themselves, through education and job reservation provided by the Constitution of India. Baburao Bagul reveals the unforgiving realities of life in an uneducated Dalit widow's life. He attests the struggles of woman in his work. His short story shows the external as well as internal conflict faced by the Dalit woman. Bagul discloses the thrust as well as the augment of Pandu's mother.

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15

Interpretation Wowen Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*

— *G. K. Santhosha*

This paper attempts to evaluate the Indian women identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), the 2000 Pulitzer-Prize winning volume of nine short stories, is the first work of Jhumpa Lahiri, the Anglo-American writer of Indian descents. This book tells of the experience of diaspora and makes the reader acquainted with the complexities and nuances of such an experience. The world that Lahiri portrays in almost all her fiction is set in motion against the cultural tension, anxiety and resultant dialogues that take place when two very different sections of the World – First and Third – in general and Indians and Americans in particular intersect due to a large-scale transnational migration – itself an after—effect of colonialism and globalization respectively. Concerned mostly with the disappointment, failure and at-times success of Indian immigrants in America, Lahiri's stories in Interpreter of Maladies abound with male and female characters who, being displaced, are struggling to survive in the unfamiliar surroundings they are entangled in. One needs to consider though that although most stories are set in The New World, there are still those

like "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" which are based in Calcutta. Yet, no matter what the settings are, all these nine stories are united by the common motif of "exclusion, loneliness and the search for fulfilment." It is the presence of such shared motifs and the existence of subtle relations between the stories that, as Brada-Williams suggests, readers tend to read the collection as a "short story cycle" and not simply as a compilation of separate unrelated stories. Widely acknowledged since their publication, Lahiri's stories have been the centre of attention for both Indian and American critics whose articles have more or less dealt with different aspects of one or more of these stories. It is, therefore, in the context of such works that the present study takes its departure. Yet, it is worth mentioning that despite the diversity of such topics and concerns, the attention paid to the stories of the collection has not been even. Some like "A Temporary Matter" and "Interpreter of Maladies" – the title story – have been a favourite subject for discussion, whereas, others like "This Blessed House" or "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" mostly have only been named or merely appreciated without any detailed exploration of the forces which play a great part in creation of the indelible impression left on the readers of such stories. Besides, no specific study has been fully dedicated to a sustained study of the female subjects of the Indian diaspora as presented by Lahiri in her Interpreter of Maladies. As Gayatri Gopinath laments in her essay, "the centrality of [male-male or father-son] trope as the primary trope in imagining diaspora invariably displaces and elides female diasporic subjects". This manifests itself more when one compares the number of female characters in Lahiri's work with the number of all-inclusive articles or books written on them. No wonder, a detailed exploration of all female subjects of this collection is far beyond the scope of a single article and is yet suggested as a possible future scholarly work. This essay, therefore, needs to be selective and thus focuses on those stories whose main

plot more directly revolves around the construction of the female rather than the male identity; stories that deal with the suffering, pressure and possible failure or success in the adaptation–process of these female characters in (re-) constructing their subjectivity, (re-)asserting their agency or negotiating their identities through either silence, resistance, negotiation, acculturation or assimilation. The present study then aims at offering a more nuanced interpretation and focused study directed at highlighting the identity–crisis of these often unvoiced and elided diasporic female subjects as portrayed by Jhumpa Lahiri in three of her stories in Interpreter of Maladies, namely "Mrs. Sen", "This Blessed House", "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" and "Sexy". Migration, globalization and its aftermath – being an indispensible part of all theories of postcolonialism – makes this study take a postcolonial stand in reading these stories. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak whose key critical terms such as "hybridity", "liminality", "stereotype", "mimicry" and "subaltern" are to be briefly discussed in the following section which, setting out some essential guidelines, gives an overview of the theoretical framework upon which the present study is built.

In the postcolonial world, highly marked by globalization, transnational migration has turned into a fact of life. Thus, there are numerous groups of people who traverse across the national borders to reach to their promised land. She believes, has long been either appropriated or silenced by dominant discourses, includes social identities that are further down the social scale consisting of those like the female postcolonial subject and the new gendered immigrant. It is this attention to the situation and predicaments of female immigrant as distinct from her male counterpart that makes Spivak's views and concerns particularly relevant to Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies. The present study's central focus then is not only on the means by which the female subjects of diaspora in Lahiri's world deal with their subalternity and

identity–crisis but also on an exploration of her narrative with the aim of challenging the often–asked Spivakian question of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Is Lahiri, after all a spokesperson for the Indian subjects of diaspora or does she create a space in which their concerns can be voiced and their stories get told?

The sixth story of Interpreter of Maladies tells the story of Mrs. Sen, the wife of an academic, who looks after Eliot, an eleven year old boy, after his school time every day. A detailed study of her character proves her to be struggling in the process of adaptation to the new American cultural space. Posited in a liminal space, she has to confront the culture of the Other, and is therefore, on the verge of negotiating a new identity. Although – as a new and enforced immigrant in the United States ("White drumshaped lampshades flanking the sofa were still wrapped in the manufacturer's plastic" ; "Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence"[Lahiri, 124; 128]) – Mrs. Sen has taken the very first steps of the adaptation process, she like many other first generation immigrants is still too obsessed with her own cultural background and homeland values that she is too far from being assimilated. Her reaction to the threat to her ethnic identity and the culture of Other is simply an unconscious attempt to take refuge in the past and to avoid the present through as many different means as possible. She, through constant retelling of the stories of her life and relationships "at home" ("At home, you know, we have a driver" or the confession that "Everthing is there [Lahiri, 125; 126]), surrounds herself and even others like Eliot by narratives of her past life in order to help herself feel at home within the safety of such narratives. Her daily activities also are arranged upon the theme of escape. While she prefers delaying her driving practices which are obviously the necessity of her new life, she steadily keeps at her special Indian-cooking daily practices and cooks vigorously despite the fact that

there now exists only she and her husband to eat all this food. It is as if her cooking style and her interest in buying and having fish, which have associations with her idea of homeland, are her means of asserting her ethnic identity. Although useful in lubricating the process of change and paving the way towards formation of her future hybrid identity, Mrs. Sen's attachment is also simultaneously blocking the "acculturation" process which Esman defines as "acceptance and adaptation of basic elements of the local culture, its language and its lifestyle" (103). No wonder her broken English of Indian accent ("'Is it Beethoven?' she asked once, pronouncing the first part of the composer's name not 'bay,' but 'bee,' like the insect [Lahiri, 130]), is a sign of her initial acceptance of the Other culture, but still there are many elements of her life like sticking to the colourful collection of her now out-of-place saris from her homeland that stay in the way of transition and acceptance. However, her final act of taking the courage to drive in order to be independent from a seemingly busy patriarchal figure of a husband who is not always there to help can be regarded as a revolutionary act. Mrs. Sen has learnt that in order to survive in her new surroundings, she needs to open up herself to the culture of the other represented symbolically by the car towards which she initially shows great fear – a fear much associated with the encounter between the Self/Other culture. Her first attempt to cross the boundaries fails but, no matter how traumatic the experience is, it at least makes her face the trauma and possibly release herself from the vicious cycle of escape and avoidance through being more open to the realm of the Other – what is definitely going to prove useful in crafting and negotiating her new diasporic identity and in encouraging her to embrace her new life in America.

"The Treatment of Bibi Haldar", the penultimate story of Lahiri's collection is one of its two stories which are set in India. Its theme, however, has much in common with the other stories of the plight and anxiety of the female

subaltern as it follows the aftermaths of the globalization process in the life of a native Indian woman who is a victim of both destitution and homelessness. Bibi Haldar is a woman living in India, in her own homeland, but is more or less exposed to the Othering process. Interestingly enough, "The treatment of Bibi Haldar" and "Mrs. Sen" have two shared points: firstly, both women are thirtyish. Secondly, Bibi Haldar's neighbors are replications of those Indian neighbors who Mrs. Sen had longed for in America: "At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone but just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements" (Lahiri, 128). Interestingly then, Bibi's neighbours, a group of philanthropic caring Indian housewives of the same building where Bibi is living as a marginalized sick inhabitant, are much more eager than her own so called relatives to offer help. Bibi has long suffered from a strange unknown ailement, and while numerous possible treatments have been suggested, none has proved to be useful. Bibi longs for a normal life in which she can have a husband and bear children. Despite Bibi's male cousin's lack of interest in such a topic, female neighbors do all they can to help her on the way to normalcy. Yet, their attempt fails as nobody agrees to take the sick Bibi Haldar as a wife. The twist though comes at the end of the story when Bibi, who has led a life of solitude and isolation on the roof of the building, gets pregnant and, giving birth to a son, is finally yet curiously cured. Reading the story in the light of female identity-formation process, one can come up with the view that "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" can be in fact read as a commentary on the constructedness of the Indian notion of femininity and its possible burden on the life of the marginalized female subaltern in Calcutta, India. While Mrs. Sen lives in America and the threats to her identity are coming from the Other culture of her host land, Bibi Haldar's identity

which is at odds with the culturally-constructed gender codes of her society is threatened by the Other cultural codes of her home land. The process of Othering takes places everywhere and at all times; identities, therefore, are always in the process of being made and remade. Bibi's Otherness to the culture she has been shaped in, is emphasized from the very beginning of the story in the guise of her allegorical mental disease – a disease which becomes the source of her being Othered as it "confined her world to the unpainted four-story building" (Lahiri, 173). The source of this disease then, seems to be nothing but a departure from an adherence to the ethnic cultural codes. Anyone not clinging to these codes is doomed to Otherness – even in her own homeland. Bibi's disease is the result of her breaking of such codes both by her physical look; "She was not pretty. Her upper lip was thin, her teeth too small. Her gums protruded when she spoke" (Lahiri, 174), and the things she could not do; "Bibi had never been taught to be a woman" (Lahiri, 178). Bibi's identity-crisis comes to surface when she wants to negotiate a new identity by embracing these gender codes of the Other. Despite the feminist community solidarity, this seems to be an impossible act as fitting into the ethnic cultural codes needs certain essential characteristics which are missing in Bibi. So that, all her attempts to embrace such codes result in acts of mimicry when in order to practice, she is urged by the other women "to engage in small conversations with nearby men" (Lahiri, 180). In such practices what is after all parodied and ridiculed is the very definition of the Self (The Self of Bibi's Community). This, however, seemingly opens the way for formation of the final "hybrid" identity of Bibi Haldar which soon leads to the treatment of her disease. Bibi, through negotiating between the Self and Other, becomes a mother without being a wife – a half–sate of both this and that. It is this hybrid nature of Bibi Haldar's identity whose subversive dimension arms Spivak's subaltern with an act of resistance – an act that

melts the boundaries of Self/Other and initiates an act of negotiation between both.

It is now time to return to the question and aim proposed in the beginning of this essay and to examine the findings in order to answer the principal question of how the female subject and her identity-crisis is portrayed in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies. This proposed question, though, seems to be faulty and out of place now as there is no one single way of representing the diasporic trauma involved in negotiating female identities either as female immigrants or female natives. Each individual, from Mrs. Sen to Miranda has their own means of survival; one resists while the other accepts; one acculturates, whereas, the other escapes. No doubt, all such reactions are due to the existence of negotiable identities which are always in the process of becoming and changing. Female characters of Lahiri's fiction negotiate their new unstable identities through their own different means and their own individual voice. What matters most from a Spivakian viewpoint is that such stories and voices are not appropriated and homogenized but are treated as distinct and particular. Gayatri Spivak, the Indian-American critic, in "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern" suggests literary texts as "an alternative rhetorical site for articulating the histories of Subaltern women" whose stories have been untold and whose voice have gone unheard.

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16

Woman – No More 'An Unarmed Target' a Study of Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi"

— *Vatsalya R.*

One who comes across postcolonial and subaltern studies cannot ignore the name of Mahasweta Devi. Though her works are written in her local language (Bengali), the national reading public have access to her works through translation. She never accepts the existing ideals but always aspire to find and explore something challenging and new. Condition of women as a subaltern subject in the postcolonial nation state needs to be closely analyzed as there is no real independence for them. Women and ethnic minorities become the 'other' in postcolonial nation state. Devi criticizes the democratic practice of the nation state where the tribal are called to work for the nation but the nation failed to recognize their needs.

Breast Stories, written by Mahasweta Devi, translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the doyenne of postcolonial analysis, features the women protagonists in a different light by focusing on contemporary questions of politics, gender and class. Women protagonists of Devi refuse to accept the identities that are available to them. They form their own identity. Their identities are not fixed but they become an attitude, process and thinking.

Devi's stories are remarkable for their complete lack of sentimentality. She always writes for deprived section of people. . Her stories bring to the surface not only the misery of the completely ignored tribal people, but also articulate the oppression of women in the society. The hard life stories of the tribals who are oppressed by the moneylenders and landlords, condescended to by the government, aided in uselessly inappropriate ways by charity groups and well-meaning city people, are described in her distinctively matter-of-fact style. Mahasweta Devi writes in a mixture of tribal and folk dialects and urban Bengali.

Like most of her stories, "Draupadi" is set among the tribals in Bengal. It is probably one of Mahasweta Devi's most famous stories, and has been reprinted and translated in several collections. The setting of "Draupadi" is the peasant rebellion Naxalbari area of the northern part of West Bengal in 1967. The people near Naxalbari in North Bengal are mostly tribals– the Medis, Lepchas, Bhutias, Santhals, Orangs. Devi's "Draupadi", is primarily, the story of a Santhal tribal woman raped by men in power, that is, her sexual torture in police custody. Rape is considered as a bolt on the forehead of an innocent woman. In "Draupadi", Devi debunks and transgresses the narrow, apolitical, socio-personal grid to which the female protagonists are usually confined in traditional feminist fiction. In the darkness of the tribal forests, it is struggle of the entire extinction of an entire species of the petty peasant.

Dopdi, (Draupadi is pronounced as Dopdi by the tribal people), a twenty-seven year old tribal woman, is named by her mistress and she is in the list of wanted persons who had killed the mistress' husband, Surja Sahu a land-owning moneylender, because he refuses to share water with untouchables. A reward of two hundred rupees is announced for her head. Dopdi herself sees that notice at the Panchayat office. Mr. Senanayak, an official, moves

with the tribal as their friend and successfully corners Dopdi in the evening. She is kept at the canvas-camp till the dinner time. Senanayak permits the officials to do, whatever, they like. Her hands and legs are tied to four posts. She becomes unconscious. In the morning she is brought to the tent. On seeing the general the dishonored Dopdi walks towards him to exhibit what has happened to her.

Draupadi stands up. . . . . Tears her piece of cloth with her teeth. . . . Senanayak . . . sees Draupadi, naked, walking toward him in the bright sunlight with her head high What is this? He is about to cry, but stops. Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds. What is this? He is about to bark. Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, the object of your search, Dopdi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up; don't you want to see how they made me? (402).

She is brutally subjected to gang-rape through the endless silent suffering night. After this barbaric act of violating the female honour Draupadi proceeds daringly towards "Senanayak" and, she confronts her exploiters naked and bleeding, thereby making the rapists shameful of how to face this unexpected situation, and the reader distressed and sorry for their cruelty. . Mahasweta Devi gives voice to the voiceless unfortunate of the earth, her literary output is an attempt to shake the conscience of the citizens, to make them notice, identify, and analyze what goes unnoticed, unheard by the naked eye. She is treated as an inferior being in comparison to her male counterpart. But the heroine of Devi's short story "Draupadi" is not a meek and passive one. She confronts her predators in a defiant manner and nowhere shows herself as weak in her comparison with men. In her story, Mahasweta Devi shows how Draupadi resists and inverts this fear and disgrace of Rape towards her exploiters. She prefers the way of

resisting instead of remain silent. She shows no trace of shame on her face, instead, her oppressors felt ashamed.

Her empowerment freezes the General. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (6), the translator and critic writes that the illiterate and low-born woman teaches the male officials a shocking lesson. They are unable to face the "Unarmed target".

It is when she crosses the sexual differential into the field of what could only happen to a woman that she emerges as the most powerful "subject," who, still using the language of sexual "honor," can derisively call herself "the object of your search," whom the author can describe as a terrifying super object– "an unarmed target." (Gayatri Spivak, 388).

Thus Mahasweta's "Draupadi", unlike the mythical Draupadi (in *Mahabharata*), does not pray for a saviour to help her. Rather she emerges as a most powerfull 'subject', a super object, who was an "an unarmed target", now terrifies the so called powerholders. Draupadi depicts how a marginalized tribal women derives strength from her body and her inner feminine core to fight against her marginality. She defies shame traditionally associated to a woman's body. Less of a feminist and more of a humanist, Mahasweta alleges that women should be judged from the point of view of a human and not from the point of view of gender, race, caste and class.

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